Communicative Language Teaching and Language Teacher Education

by

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Abstract

This study explores a basic paradox. On the one hand, innovations that appear in the field of language teaching - or indeed any other field of endeavour - in order to be maximally effective, need in some way to be incorporated into the contexts of their application. However, such contexts are often unfavourable to the reception of new ideas which consequently need to undergo some measure of adjustment prior to their implementation in the classroom. As such those ideas are seldom realisable in their 'true colours'. Furthermore, they are at times themselves not very clear even within their own terms, and may suffer to varying degrees from vagueness, diffusion and instances of contradiction.

What I seek to do in the chapters that follow is investigate Communicative Language Teaching in order to (i) establish what the basic tenets of the approach are, and (ii) identify those factors that affect the way in which communicative principles could be made acceptable and effective with particular reference to the language teaching/learning situation in Japan.

As a necessary corollary of this investigation, consideration is given to the implications for language teacher education where, it is argued, teachers-to-be need to be provided with the means via which to most effectively evaluate innovative ideas and come to terms with those difficulties that arise from attempts to apply general principles to particular circumstances.

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It is commonly said that the researcher's path can be a lonely one to tread. In itself, this is perhaps no bad thing. However, when coupled with the sometimes severe intellectual and emotional challenges one inevitably meets along the way, that loneliness can become all too tangible and threaten to undermine the confidence and the hope necessary to see things through to completion. It is at such times that support 'mechanisms' are like beacons, lifelines, in what at the time feel like the darkest hours of despair and frustration. There are three such beacons that deserve my sincerest thanks.

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Preface

While years ago everything in language pedagogy was 'audiolingual' and 'structural', 'communication' and 'communicative' have taken over the dubious privilege of being the fashionable terms today.

Stern 1992, p. 11

The study that follows is, in essence, a commentary which takes as its point of departure the commonly voiced accusation that the field of language teaching is fragmented and disorientated. It is broadly critical in tone, suggesting as it does that such accusations have more than a little basis in fact, and that despite the discipline being able to boast a degree of dynamism, vibrancy and enterprise, there are nevertheless two fundamental levels at which there is good cause for concern.

The first of these has to do with the often unsystematic and uncritical way in which new ideas are taken up and incorporated into - or in some cases supersede - established theoretical paradigms and pedagogical practices. There exists a lack of depth and coherence surrounding the treatment of those various frameworks, concepts and ideas that have to different degrees impacted upon the field, and there has been a paucity of thoroughgoing attempts from all quarters of the language teaching profession to manifest an adequate concern with integrating and moulding such interests into a unified whole.

The second and related point of concern is the sometimes nonchalant, insensitive and uncompromising fashion in which - often state of the art - ideas are employed in particular teaching-learning situations, showing little or no regard for local conditions and customs.

The need for a change in the behaviour of practitioners - and therefore, by implication, language teacher educators also - aimed at rectifying this trend and rescuing the field from its detractors, is illustrated in the following pages via an examination of what is currently the most prevalent approach to foreign language teaching - the communicative approach - and the theoretical as well as the practical baggage that title carries with it. Moreover, the potential implicational significance of such change is made apparent through a look at the Japanese language teaching/learning situation specifically.

What follows then, is a critique via example; a general commentary based upon a particular instance and which gives rise to the proposal that any shift in the professional teacher's orientation to ideas must originate within the process of language teacher education. That is, student teachers need to be alerted to the importance of - and made accustomed to - carefully scrutinising the many new ideas that perennially appear in our field, both in terms of whether in themselves they remain credible in the face of rigorous investigation, as well as if and how they may be systematically, effectively, yet considerately matched to local teaching conditions.

A Preview of the Argument

The discussion begins with an introduction presenting the experiential and theoretical motivation for the study as a whole. Two key points (outlined above) emerge from this initial analysis: Firstly, merely because an idea predominates in language teaching does not constitute evidence that it has been adequately appraised and is free of sometimes considerable conceptual problems. This leads into a discussion of what it is that determines paradigmatic status, for it seems that the currently favoured paradigm in language teaching has become so despite apparently suffering from numerous such conceptual problems - detailed more thoroughly Chapters 2 and 3. Secondly, simply being the current paradigm or a fashionable idea in language teaching is not licence for the teacher to apply that paradigm/idea rigorously, regardless of situational constraints imposed by a particular set of learners in a particular environment. Failure to understand this can lead to the kind of discomfort and disillusionment experienced by this writer in Japan.

In order to illustrate the first of these points, Chapter 2 turns specifically to the so-called *communicative approach to language teaching*. In attempting to define this approach with the help of a descriptive framework, the conclusion is drawn (Chapters 2 and 3) that whilst certain general principles are identifiable as central the approach, it is nevertheless characterised by a disturbing measure of fuzziness, instances of inconsistency and contradiction, and a general lack of coherence.

So as to detect how and where these problems have arisen, a brief analysis is entered into of the notion of communicative competence (said to lie at the heart of communicative language teaching) as well as of the various interpretations given it and formalised in frameworks such as those proposed (most notably) by Canale and Swain, Bachman, and of course Hymes himself who popularised the term. While these interpretations may be (and are) questioned in terms of their theoretical *validity* as accurate descriptions of language use, it is argued that the question more crucial as a key to understanding the problems identified is whether such frameworks have *utility*, and how that utility is provided by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) - generally considered to be the methodological realisation of communicative competence theory. It is through addressing this question that a major key to the confusions surrounding CLT appears to come to light, for the approach in effect seeks to provide communicative competence frameworks with utility (and thus link the ends with the means of learning) through the notion of authenticity. This, I suggest in Chapter 5, is misguided, and in Chapter 6 go on to illustrate how, in doing away with 'authenticity' as it is generally understood in CLT, most - if not all - of the problems identified in Chapters 2 and 3 appear to be reconcilable.

Following a detailed examination in Chapter 7 of the Japanese teaching-learning context, Chapter 8 embarks upon an assessment of the consequences those findings outlined in Chapter 6 might have for this particular context of operation, (the concern of the second key point above). The conclusion is reached that the change of perspective precipitated by the kind of analysis encouraged in preceding chapters can, given a degree of skill and sensitivity, result in new ideas being implemented more successfully in circumstances which may initially appear to be hopelessly at odds with those ideas.

Rather than attempting to establish the significance for materials design of findings reached in Chapters 1-8 concerning CLT, the remainder of the study goes on instead to pursue the implications for language teacher education of the kind of analytical process engaged in during the course of establishing those findings.

Chapter 9 thus addresses the issue of language teacher education and offers a series of proposals designed to help ensure that language teachers are adequately aware of the need to (a) thoroughly scrutinise and understand new ideas, (b) sufficiently inform themselves of the socio-

cultural/educational setting to which they intend to apply those ideas, and (c) forge an acceptable compromise between the two. The proposals offered seek not merely to increase teacher *awareness* of these needs, but to provide them with opportunities to hone the skills necessary for realising them.

Chapter 10 subsequently asks whether it is realistic to expect to be able to develop these skills in Japanese teachers, or whether it is a fact of life that, regardless of the rationale motivating them, the degree to which such skills can be adopted will always be governed to some extent by the cultural dispositions of the student teachers towards whom they are directed.

Finally, in Chapter 11, a number of concluding remarks are made reflecting key points arising from the study and drawing attention to a series of cautionary points that bear consideration when assessing any proposals for change in language teacher education designed to reshape teacher attitudes and behaviour.

Throughout the thesis, the third person singular *he* is, for the sake of convenience and in all instances of its use, intended to refer to both genders.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Beginnings of a Research Project

This thesis could be seen as comprising three central elements. The first concerns ideas in language teaching and attitudes toward them; the second has to do with teaching-learning context and the way in which it influences the implementation of such ideas; and the third involves language teacher education and the promotion of a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of the significance of the relationship between ideas and the social/physical context of their application. Given the fact that ideas in language teaching *only* become truly meaningful in application - that is, when their value becomes realisable - it follows that the theme common to all three of these elements is that of context. Indeed, as will quickly become apparent, the wide-ranging, all-pervasive influence of contextual factors in language teaching is an issue which in some way or form backgrounds every aspect of the discussion appearing in the following pages.

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the prelude to that discussion should begin, below, with a brief introductory glimpse of the Japanese language teaching context in particular. It was during a nine year period of working in Japan that, having initially harboured and been rudely disabused of a naÏve confidence that communicative language teaching had most, if not all, the English teacher's answers, frustrated efforts in the classroom subsequently awakened me to the fact that all was perhaps not as it should be in the language teaching profession. In a nutshell, ideas prevalent in language teaching - and, in the case of Japan, the principles and techniques associated with the communicative paradigm in particular - were not being assessed carefully enough in relation to their contexts of application. Indeed, the link between the two facets of pedagogy hardly seemed an issue. Instead, all too often where the implementation of ideas proved problematical, the tone among the visiting English language fraternity was - and is - too often one not of compromise, but criticism of the learners' (and in some cases local

teachers') own cultural predispositions. This phenomenon is very much symptomatic of Phillipson's notion of "educational imperialism" which is "intrinsically asymmetrical and impositional" in nature (1992, p. 260), and disregardful of the pragmatic realities of local context that govern the effective application of ideas. The result can be ineffectual teaching practices and disastrously misdirected programmes. Both suggest a change of attitude and perceptions is in order.

1.1.1 An Anecdote: Teaching EFL in Japan

As a result of its increased international economic and political prominence, the mastery of foreign languages - particularly English - has been heavily promoted in Japan in recent years and a huge and profitable industry born the gross value of which exceeds that of similar concerns in other developed countries, according to Henrichsen (1989). Linguistic proficiency has more than ever become a key ingredient of personal and corporate success in Japan, and not surprisingly this emphasis has filtered down to the education profession with a number of repercussions including the following:

- An increase in the prominence of English in school, college and university programmes.
- A significant increase in the number of native speakers employed by these institutions to teach English; and more recently of tenured positions traditionally withheld for the most part from non-Japanese teachers/lecturers.
- An increased emphasis on conversation and the ability to function usefully in the language.
- The emergence of government-sponsored programmes (e.g. JET) through which graduates of British, Australian and American universities are brought to Japan as high school Assistant English Teachers (AETs).
- The recognition of Japan by publishing companies as a prime target for the commercial success of English language teaching/learning materials.
- An increased awareness of and participation in theoretical discussion surrounding the field; a trend borne witness to by the existence and increasing stature of professional bodies such as JALT (Japan

Association of Language Teachers) and JACET (Japan Association of College English Teachers), as well as the volume of related research originating in Japan.

- The establishment of 'overseas campuses' by foreign (primarily US and UK) colleges and universities offering EAP and MA (TESOL) programmes.

These developments have led to English teachers - and Japanese English teachers in particular - becoming far better informed about current issues and practices in language teaching, what is considered state of the art, and especially about communicative language teaching (CLT).

One important effect of this increased awareness of CLT in a culture tuned very much to traditional methods of foreign language teaching has been to create a conflict between Japanese cultural values as they are manifested in the classroom, and many of the kinds of activities closely associated with a communicative approach. That is, teachers are torn between the very considerable pressures to conform to cultural norms that support a classroom dynamic which is "position-oriented" (Bernstein 1971; in Widdowson 1990, p. 128) on the one hand and which maintains the status quo by reinforcing the established social order, and at the same time the desire and a sense of professional integrity to apply what are considered to be state of the art pedagogical principles and practices not in keeping with that order. This opposition creates a tangible sense of unease among Japanese English teachers. Not only are they themselves uncomfortable with doing things antithetical to ingrained cultural precepts and dispositions, but they are also equally aware of the discomfort, resentment, confusion and inhibition their behaviour can and does cause in their students. The dilemma facing these teachers, therefore, is the extent to which they should be/are prepared to compromise fundamental attitudinal and behavioural traits in the interests of what is considered to be sound pedagogy. For the native speaker in Japan the problem is somewhat similar in as far as he (the native speaker) has to decide the extent to which, if at all, he intends to encroach upon cultural values in the interest of implementing what is the currently favoured paradigm.

What is the best way to reconcile the opposition? Although, within Japan, reform of the educational system (largely under the auspices of the state education department, or *Mombushó*) in response to the need for culturally broad-minded and linguistically proficient individuals is a 'hot'

political issue at present, and "internationalisation" on the tongues of many educators, any developments that have so far come about as a result aim more at content modifications than attitudes toward the teaching/learning process, with the result that the latter remain for the most part very parochial and the teacher's dilemma unresolved.

With this situation in mind, the study that follows was, in its embryonic stage, intended as an exploratory, ethnographic study of the nature of the relationship between communicative language teaching and Japanese cultural patterns as manifested in classroom behaviour, with an eye, ultimately, to determining whether and how the two aspects of language teaching in Japan might be reconciled. As such, two elements would have been central: A study of the classroom culture of Japan and the pressures that encourage institutions and their teachers and students to conform to the dictates of that culture; and an analysis of communicative language teaching - in particular its theoretical motivation and, within that frame of reference, its principles and practices and their implicational status. It was the second of these two elements that proved to be problematical and which consequently shifted the emphasis of the study, with the result that the Japanese language teaching-learning context became somewhat more peripheral to the main slant of the study, and now features as an exemplification of those ideas which make up the central theme.

What became clear early on was that despite its enormous currency and the proliferation of literature relating to it, communicative language teaching is beset with confusions, contradictions and variable terminology and interpretations to such a degree that the approach almost defies description except in very elementary terms. This was a disturbing finding given its prominence in language teaching, and the common assumption that when - as so frequently happens - people make reference to the "communicative approach" or particular concepts, principles or techniques commonly associated with it, they are sharing similar anchor points.

A primary focus of the study is thus communicative language teaching; a critical survey of the approach and an attempt to unravel some of the confusions and distortions that currently plague it. It is an analysis which ultimately offers a somewhat different perspective on communicative language teaching and in doing so allows the syllabus

designer/teacher more room to adapt the approach to different cultural contexts - the Japanese classroom being one such context.

However, there is also a broader question at issue; one which pre-empts such analysis, overshadows the study as a whole and ultimately has implications for language teacher preparation programmes: How is it that an approach currently pre-eminent in language teaching and widely regarded as 'today's paradigm' can manifest the kinds of confusions and contradictions (identified in Chapters 2 and 3) that serve only to bring the field into disrepute? In order to methodically address this question it is necessary to begin at the most fundamental level with a brief investigation into the paradigm and the dynamics of paradigm change. One of the main questions such an investigation will seek to answer is whether the problems communicative language teaching faces are symptomatic of a perspective on language that has not reaped the benefits of having been subject to those processes associated with paradigm change; or whether, despite having been so subject, the field is guilty of subsequently adopting and applying the new paradigm in an uncompromising, blinkered and unreflective (even reckless) fashion. It is to the concept of the paradigm, therefore, that we first turn.

1.2 Science, Paradigms and Language Teaching

1.2.1 Defining the Paradigm

A paradigm is a theoretical construct, an accepted model which dictates the general framework within which a particular field of study conducts its process of inquiry with the intention of most effectively defining, and if possible solving, what Kuhn (1962) refers to as the "puzzles" challenging that particular scientific community. This process of inquiry is what Ryan (1970) in his discussion of Kuhn is referring to when he speaks of the "rules of scientific life":

> ...the scientific community is defined by the theories it accepts, which in a sense prescribe the norms and rules governing acceptable research and acceptable solutions to scientific problems. A scientist becomes 'socialised' into the scientific community by accepting the rules about e.g. what counts as an experiment, and what as an explanatory hypothesis; learning the current 'paradigms' is learning the rules of scientific life.
>
> (Ryan 1970, p. 142)

As such, a paradigm is essentially a privileged theory or set of theories, and the rules of inquiry they have spawned. These have acquired the status of "paradigm" by virtue not only of their success in responding to problems deemed critical by the community embracing them, but also of the scope they provide and within which that inquiry can proceed. In discussing how paradigms become such, Kuhn effectively provides us with a definition of the construct:

> Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognise as acute... The success of a paradigm ...is at the start largely a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples. Normal science consists in the actualisation of that promise, an actualisation achieved by extending the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself.
>
> (Kuhn 1962, pp. 23-24)

A new paradigm offers a new tradition of normal science, and this involves reconstructing the field at a fundamental level and changing some of the "most elementary theoretical generalisations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications." (Kuhn, ibid. p. 85)

1.2.2 The Causes of Paradigm Shifts

The forces that bring about a change of paradigm can be broadly divided into two categories. Firstly, there are those which in some way relate specifically and directly to the paradigm currently in favour and to that about to supersede it. These forces, which I shall term *internal,* are in essence the result of the perceptions of the community concerned as to the relative abilities of the current paradigm and its successor to respond - and in large part *potentially* respond - to developments and insights that have

taken place in the field, and the concomitant challenges (or "puzzles") that inevitably derive from them.

The second category is of forces which are more 'peripheral' in the sense that they are distinct or removed from the purely scientific procedures of paradigmatic observation and evaluation - the proposal, testing and acceptance or rejection of theories. They may, however, be no less significant and influential for this, although purists might argue that in an ideal world they ought to bear no relationship whatsoever to the scientific process. Due to the fact that they operate outside of this process, I shall term these forces *external*. Their influence may work proactively by supporting the emergence of a new paradigm, retroactively, by helping in some way to consolidate the paradigm following its adoption, or both. In each case, however, the role is one not of instigation, but reinforcement. They are, therefore, necessarily of secondary importance to the phenomenon of paradigm change, for regardless of how influential they may be in terms of reinforcing the relevance of a paradigm, they cannot in themselves *provoke a change* of paradigm; that must be left primarily to the processes of scientific evolution.

1.2.2.1 The Internal Forces of Paradigm Change

It is in the nature of the scientific enterprise that ideas and beliefs are continually subjected to scrutiny and fresh challenges from new data and observations, new discoveries. How successfully and elegantly the existing paradigm is able to incorporate these conditions into its framework is a measure of its ability to ward off the challenges of would-be successors to its status. These challenges are always present to some extent, even immediately after a paradigm has become widely accepted by the majority, for there are always those who question the validity of the new paradigm. It is only when anomalies "penetrate existing knowledge to the core" (Kuhn ibid. p. 65) that there develops the state of crisis - or "extraordinary science" - that is a precondition of a change of paradigm. Kuhn provides the following analogy:

> So long as the tools a paradigm supplies continue to prove capable of solving the problems it defines, science moves fastest and penetrates most deeply through confident employment of those tools. The reason is clear. As in manufacture so in science - retooling is an extravagance to be reserved for the occasion that

> demands it. The significance of crises is the indication they provide that an occasion for retooling has arrived.
>
> (Kuhn 1962, p. 76)

The extravagance of a paradigm shift will often be the result of indications from multiple disciplines of the new way ahead, and will only come about if there exists an alternative candidate ready to displace the waning paradigm. As such, the rejection of one paradigm is in effect the acceptance of another. Were it not so, there would be crisis indeed, for the field would be temporarily 'lost' and in a state of suspension. The alternative candidate will frequently, though not necessarily, have been constructed *as a result of* uncertainty created by the "malfunction" or failure of the current paradigm to adequately respond to the puzzles is finds itself faced with; uncertainty which, Kuhn notes, is generally characterised by a "proliferation of versions of a theory" (Kuhn, ibid. p. 71) as well as a reassessment of the fundamentals of the field. It is as a consequence of the nature of this reassessment that the ousted paradigm and its successor are irreconcilable.

How the successor initially becomes established as a credible candidate, a provider of a framework of operation superior to that of its predecessor, depends upon a gradual process of intellectual infiltration of the community concerned. The media through which that process operates are, typically, journal publications, books elucidating and often persuasively arguing for the paradigm and the theories underlying it, conference presentations, and word of mouth amongst members of the community - members not necessarily well versed in or sympathetic to the new paradigm.

1.2.2.2 The External Forces of Paradigm Change

It has been suggested (section 1.2) that these forces strengthen the impact of the paradigm candidate either prior to or following its adoption by the community, though without wielding the power ultimately to determine its status. They potentially emanate from four different spheres of interest, the latter three of which tend to work in combination and might reasonably come under the rubric of *ideology*.

Technological innovation is one such sphere. A paradigm's potency may in part depend upon the availability of technology through which it can realise its potential, both in terms of the ability to carry out the

empirical investigation needed to confirm the community's faith in it to respond to puzzles and shed light on the field, as well as in terms of providing a theoretical framework which allows for the possibility of a practical application. That application may be dependent upon a certain level of technological sophistication.

Social, economic and *political* make up the other three spheres of interest. In their cases, what will often happen is that social change of some kind will trigger changes in economic or commercial circumstances which in turn will lead to the emergence of a shift of political consciousness. This may then have repercussions on the cognisance of educational and research institutions. Different disciplines operating within these institutions may then mutually reinforce such trends, creating a kind of domino effect. As we have noted, in an ideal world these effects ought not ultimately to encroach upon the realms of scientific evolution, but they can help reinforce the directions such processes take and the dominance of the paradigm that emerges.

Of course, the *social* → *economic* → *political* sequence of events is not prerequisite to a new awareness in the educational and research institutions, and any combination of the three - or indeed even one working in isolation - may provoke a similar reaction. It is unusual, however, for the political element not to be involved, for any major alteration in economic or social conditions will generally preface an alteration in the political sphere.

Perhaps somewhere between the categories of internal and external forces, there lies another (psychological) factor in paradigm change which can help directly provoke a shift of paradigm, yet which is not strictly part of the scientific process. I refer to the resistance/open-mindedness of the community to the idea of change. An affinity with what is known and familiar allied to a heavy investment of time, money and reputation in the failing paradigm can lead to a situation where the community as a whole or individuals within it are unable to see or accept necessary change. Instead, they opt to force those phenomena/data that cannot be adequately accounted for into the unaccommodating mould or conceptual framework of the paradigm to which they tenaciously but misguidedly adhere. Where the resultant lack of fit is extreme, new blood in the community may be the trigger required to set off the shift. This set of circumstances would be consistent with Kuhn's observation that:

> Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change.
>
> (Kuhn 1962, p. 90)

Kuhn's later reference to Max Planck reinforces this view, although Planck perhaps overstates the case:

> A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.
>
> (Planck 1949, pp. 33-34; in Kuhn 1962, p. 151)

1.2.3 Paradigm Shifts in Linguistics: A Brief Exploration

In just the last four decades, linguistics has undergone its share of paradigmatic shifts, and underlying each of them, one can discern the kinds of internal and external forces described above.

Chomsky's much celebrated *Syntactic Structures* (1957), and subsequently his 1959 review of Skinner's *Verbal Behaviour* (1957), represent a milestone in this history of paradigmatic change, for together they created the conditions, the turbulence necessary for a "retooling" of the fundamental precepts of linguistics. Through a logical and empirical exposition, and while himself operating within the tradition of the structural linguists, the author fatally undermined the *psychological* (behaviourist) basis of structural linguistics, formulated by Moulton (1961) in terms of the following five slogans:

1) Language is speech, not writing.
2) A language is a set of habits.
3) Teach the language, not about the language.
4) A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.
5) Languages are different.

(Moulton 1961, as quoted in Diller 1978, p. 10)

As a result of Chomsky's attack on the empiricist approach to linguistics embodied in structuralism, it was replaced by the rationalist perspective of *generative grammar* encapsulated in Diller's own four propositions as

follows, and which highlight the contrast between the two approaches; a contrast momentous enough ultimately to instigate what amounted to a change of paradigm:

1) A living language is characterised by rule-governed creativity.
2) The rules of grammar are psychologically real.
3) Man is specially equipped to learn languages.
4) A living language is a language in which we can think.

(Diller 1978, p. 23)

In time, however, generative grammar was seen as inadequate in that it shared with structuralism an overly narrow concern with the formal aspects of language, a characteristic that was out of sync with a growing awareness - stimulated very much by Hymes and Halliday - of the need to take the social and situational context of communication into account, as well as the user's intentions and perceptions. The consequent shift of emphasis in linguistic theory in the mid-sixties toward discourse analysis, semantics, speech act theory, sociolinguistics and pragmatics had at its heart the notion of language as use and laid the foundations for what many regard as representing the current state of the art: the *communicative* paradigm. In looking at this paradigm more closely (as the following chapters endeavour to do at some length) it is not difficult to identify the great majority of those preconditions of paradigm change specified above. There were, for example, "indications from multiple disciplines" (e.g. anthropology, philosophy, linguistics and psychology) of a new way ahead in linguistics. The manifestations of communicative language teaching were to some extent "incomplete" in the sense that they tended to be vague and diffuse, and there was indeed a "reassessment of the fundamentals of the field" in an attempt to address the question (or "solve the puzzle") of what factors underlay language use and learners' frequent inability to communicate successfully in authentic contexts. The communicative paradigm without doubt infiltrated with a vengeance the intellectual avenues of teacher preparation programmes, conference presentations and workshops, language teacher education books, professional journals, as well as ELT materials in general. Moreover, it was able to take good advantage of audio and video technology which coincidentally began to boom and become widely available just as communicative ideology was on the ascent. Finally, social, economic and political forces were more than ever conducive to and indeed operative in

bringing about the realisation of a theory of language that emphasised its communicative or social function. This is most clearly seen in the creation of a common market system in Europe and the development of political and commercial ties with the increasingly influential region of Eastern Asia.

It seems then, that like any other science, linguistics has, despite its comparatively short history, periodically experienced changes of paradigm; changes that is where the theoretical basis for the way in which language in general is understood or accounted for shifts, in effect creating a new frame of reference, or map, according to which pedagogical co-ordinates are suitably reset by language educators sympathetic to the new paradigm.

These shifts in the ground rules - what Kuhn (1962) refers to as "revolutions" - are generally thought to be indicative of a state of intellectual health in that in order for them to come about there needs to exist an ethos in which established norms are questioned, inadequacies recognised and problems resolved via logic and empirical investigation; aspects of a process collectively termed *the scientific method*. In this respect they constitute a necessary characteristic of any field of scientific endeavour. Kuhn states:

> ...the successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science.
>
> (Kuhn 1962, p. 12)

Not only has linguistics had its share of paradigm changes, but the conditions which have given birth to them appear to have conformed closely to those identified above as typical of any such change in whatever area of scientific endeavour. On this basis, the evolution of linguistics would seem justified in laying claim to scientific legitimacy, and thus a sound intellectual foundation. For this, the linguistics and language teaching communities should perhaps be grateful.

Yet the field of language teaching - closely allied as it has become to theoretical linguistics and developments therein - is frequently beset with criticisms of fickleness, disorientation and a lack of integrity. An implicitly derogatory vocabulary of clichés is frequently employed to characterise the state of the art, with references to "swings of the pendulum", "bandwagons", "swings and cycles" etc. having become commonplace in recent years. If these criticisms have any basis in fact, then it might be considered a cause for optimism in that at least there exists an awareness

of some kind of problem and with it the basis for an improvement in the situation. However, they still raise the question of what it is that has provoked such disenchantment with the language teaching profession given that the discipline of linguistics has faithfully followed the developmental pattern of a mature science. I would suggest that such attitudes can be attributed to two underlying causes: Firstly, although historically the links between linguistics and language teaching have been weak in the sense of there having been little in the way of a theoretically sound basis established for the relationship between any particular theory of language and its pedagogical realisation, in recent years, as the communicative paradigm has flourished, efforts to bring the two into some kind of rational alignment where teaching practices are based closely upon insights derived from linguistic enquiry have increased significantly, adding impetus to the cause of *educational linguistics*; a wider view of language which, as Stern notes "for some linguists ...became linguistics in its new guise. They argued language cannot be studied any more in isolation from the user and the context" (Stern 1983, p. 147). It is in large part from within educational linguistics that the field's ills emanate, and specifically the manner in which theoretical linguistics has been pedagogically interpreted and applied in language teaching that has resulted in the latter becoming the object of a barrage of criticism centring on the notions of fickleness and disorientation spoken of above. What is apparent, is that such criticism is more robust now than previously, a situation one might put down to the influence of two main factors:

(a) The growing demand for teaching practices which are clearly seen to follow through the theoretical bases of the current paradigm.

(b) Often in the past, the question of pedagogical appropriacy and what was acceptable classroom practice was hardly an issue. In the case of structuralism, for example, complemented as it was by a then dominant behaviourist model of psychology which stressed habit formation and reinforcement as the fundamental principles of human learning, teaching practices were provided with a clear and unambiguous blueprint for what ought to go on in the classroom; a blueprint which produced the kind of drill-ridden activities that collectively became known as audiolingualism. As a result, there was little room for diversity. The communicative paradigm on the other hand, is a conglomeration of theories (speech act theory, communicative competence theory etc.) originating from a number of different disciplines and giving no obvious indication of how

best to implement the theoretical package at the level of pedagogy so as to most effectively promote learning. As we shall see, this has led proponents of communicative language teaching to rashly opt for a *product-informs-process* principle as its broad guide to pedagogical practice, and also helped encourage the emergence of numerous so-called "fringe methods", natural approaches etc.

The second reason for complaints against the current state of language teaching has to do with the all-or-nothing attitude toward paradigm change exhibited by many applied linguists and pedagogues. There has been a tendency - happily now on the wane it would seem - to take new paradigms to their extreme and accept them lock, stock and barrel, whilst comprehensively rejecting the ousted paradigm and most, if not all of the pedagogical practices associated with it. The sounder developmental route, one that would help reduce any impression of fickleness and disinterest in a more careful assessment of ideas associated with past and present paradigms, would be to build upon what is good, or potentially good in earlier paradigms and their pedagogical applications, and where appropriate integrate them into whatever is the current theoretical ethos. This would create an impression of greater integrity and continuity of purpose.

One effect of this more balanced approach would be to combat what some writers have identified as an unhealthy trend that has become widespread in the field, indeed one might even say fashionable. I refer to *eclecticism*. While it is anybody's right to take the stance of the eclectic, one is frequently led to believe that the term has largely come to represent an attitude not of investigation, of honestly and purposefully engaging in the dialectical process, but rather of defeatism - and, indeed, 'defaultism' - in the face of challenges and confusions the resolution of which would anyway ultimately need to be addressed in the interests of progress, and with potentially far greater benefits for the field.

The default value that eclecticism has acquired exemplifies a more general phenomenon associated with situations in which there exists a range of (sometimes conflicting) opinion; namely a broadening of perspective in order to subsume all such opinion rather than getting to grips with the issues and problems involved, and engaging in the kind of investigation or empirical studies that might produce a more soundly based decision as to how to proceed theoretically or practically in whatever field of interest. Retreating to a default eclecticism is tantamount to taking

the easy option. If eclecticism is to be an option at all, it must be an informed eclecticism and not a throwing up of the hands in despair. While, as Stern observes, eclecticists "have grasped that practitioners cannot limit themselves to one teaching method, the results of a single research direction, or the approach offered by one or other of the disciplines", nevertheless "we cannot choose everything, or our choices eventually become indiscriminate and unfocused" (1992, p. 14). Similarly, Widdowson has stated that there is a difference between an informed eclecticism where considered choices are made between different schools of thought, and an eclecticism which is "an excuse for irresponsible ad-hocery" (1979, p. 243).

This brings us to the crux of the present thesis and an issue which lies at the very heart of the argument and discussion that appears in the pages that follow:

1.3 Reflections on Language Teacher Education

1.3.1 Some Implications for Language Teacher-Education Programmes

If there is to be a move away from ad-hocery and caprice in language teaching and a loftier, more respected status afforded the field, then clearly there needs to be a form of quality control; a process which ensures that new ideas or proposals, before being taken on board, are first carefully scrutinised through the appropriate research procedures of rational enquiry, systematic investigation and/or controlled experiment. Language teaching, as Stern notes:

> has been the victim of swings of fashion and opinion and has often aroused partisanship for particular viewpoints. Every now and then inventors of new methods or promoters of new ideas claim to have found decisive solutions to the problems of language teaching. Such claims cannot be dismissed out of hand. But unless they are verified by the best possible methods of empirical research, we will waste our energies again and again in futile controversy.
>
> (Stern 1983, p. 58)

This is a much needed call - made, but for the most part unheeded in the past - for those in the language teaching profession to assume a more critical attitude toward new ideas. It is at the fundamental level of teacher education that such an attitude most needs to be fostered if things are to

change radically and long-term. Where there currently exists a dominant mode of operation in teacher preparation courses that sees knowledge imparted to learners as being geared towards the promotion of an appreciation of 'what is out there', its historical context and how it can be/is applied in the classroom, there needs to be a greater emphasis on developing critical awareness in student teachers, and an understanding of the importance of closely scrutinising and questioning new and established ideas in the field, particularly with regard to their intended context of application.

Between acquiring a body of knowledge and considerations of how to apply it, there needs to be an intermediary level of awareness which ensures the careful analysis of ideas; a mechanism or editing process of sorts which allows one to determine if at all and to what degree those ideas warrant or are worthy of pedagogical implementation. There is, therefore, a need for language teacher education programmes to produce individuals able to:

> ...*analyse* the main issues of language teaching practice, to define the parameters within which practitioners have to make choices, and to identify controversial questions and areas which require empirical research.
>
> (Stern 1992, p. 2; my italics)

In essence, the following study, is an illustration of that need and a proposal intended to provide some illumination on how language teacher preparation programmes might go about ensuring its realisation.

Chapter 2

THE STATE AND STATUS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (I): What is the Communicative Approach?

2.1 Introduction

> A whole set of terms clustering around the central theme of communication has come into use, such as notions, functions, speech acts and discourse. While these concepts appear to exercise an irresistible attraction in current discussions on language teaching, the wary practitioner must wonder whether "communication" or "notions and functions" are not fast becoming another new bandwagon replacing the audiolingualism and cognitivism of the 1960s and 1970's.
>
> (H. H. Stern 1981, p. 133)

Since its inception approximately two decades ago, the communicative approach has established itself as the dominant paradigm in the field of language teaching. The deluge of commercial materials purporting to apply its principles and the many applied linguistics books, articles and conference presentations devoted to the subject bear witness to its dominance. There are those in the profession, however, who view this state of affairs as unhealthy. Reference to such notions as "manifesto thinking" and "drift of habit" (Richards and Skelton 1989, p. 232) suggest it has resulted in an inability to stand back and objectively evaluate the approach and what it stands for, with theorists and practitioners alike frequently opting instead to 'go with the flow'. Many intuitively feel there has grown a tendency to compromise the creativity and potential latent in new findings and new ideas by assessing them simply according to how well they fit into the established framework of communicative language teaching (CLT). Rather than serving as catalysts of change and perhaps instigating a reassessment and modification of the approach itself, such developments often fall victim to parochialism, and whilst they may not be rejected out of hand, are nevertheless inclined to be 'adjusted' - even distorted - in the interests of conformity. Ironically, this runs very much counter to the spirit of CLT, originally proposed as a way to critical enquiry

rather than as an unassailable icon of pedagogical correctness and an uncompromising prescription for the way ahead. Had that initial spirit been more widely understood and more zealously protected, the kind of stagnation which now threatens to become the order of the day might, arguably, have been avoided.

A survey of the literature suggests there is indeed good reason to be concerned about the status of CLT, for it reveals a disturbing and - given the vast corpus of material pertaining to it - remarkable paucity of in-depth critical appraisal and thus meaningful evaluation of the approach. An important vacuum has consequently been left in the general discussion of CLT, allowing a series of weaknesses and misinterpretations to pass muster unnoticed and ultimately stunting its evolution. One undesirable by-product of this has surely been an inability to assess realistically the appropriacy of CLT to particular language learning contexts, and consequently numerous instances where there has arisen an unfortunate, if accidental, mismatch between approach and context, with negative repercussions for learning.

2.2 A Framework for Describing and Analysing Language Teaching Proposals

If this significant omission in the field is to be adequately and coherently redressed, a conceptual framework is needed which will allow for a systematic breakdown and analysis of the communicative approach while also providing the essential scaffolding from which to build subsequent proposals for change and a new way of thinking about the approach.

A number of such frameworks designed to describe language teaching approaches and methods in general are to be found in the literature (e.g. Anthony, 1963; Mackey, 1965); however, that of Richards and Rodgers (1986) is especially attractive in that it makes for the most comprehensive and detailed analysis. The model proposed below follows Richards and Rodgers' closely, although with certain differences highlighted and reflected in the choice of terminology used:

Level 1 *The Theoretical Impetus* - Those historical events, motivated by both theoretical as well as practical concerns, that have led to a shift of emphasis or paradigmatic change within the field of language teaching. *Theoretical impetus* effectively collapses Richards and Rodgers' *Background* and bipartite *Approach* respectively, comprising both an account of those historical links the method or approach has with a particular tradition or set of ideas in second or foreign language teaching, as well as the "theory of language" and "theory of learning" (where one exists) upon which it is based.

Level 2 *The Emergent Underlying Principles* - Those axioms (derived from the theories of language and learning specified at level 1) that inform syllabus design and set broad parameters controlling the nature of classroom dynamics and behaviour.

Level 3 *The Pedagogical Application* - Those features of syllabus design as well as the techniques, activities and materials, through which underlying principles (Level 2) are realised in the classroom. (The Richards and Rodgers term 'procedures' is less apt here in that it fails to convey to the same degree the causal nature of the relationship which ideally ought to exist between an approach/method's principles and the kinds of techniques it prescribes for the classroom. This is an issue to be taken up in earnest later in connection with the communicative approach.)

A Model for Describing Language Teaching Proposals

Figure 1

(Note: Level 1 above constitutes a proposal's most abstract level of conceptualisation, and level 3 its most concrete. Level 2 thus serves to translate what are essentially abstractions into terms which may then be referred to particular kinds of very concrete classroom practices.)

This apparatus of enquiry, while organisationally and terminologically somewhat at variance with that of Richards and Rodgers, remains nonetheless componentially quite similar and thus potentially offers a comparable degree of comprehensiveness. It is designed to be more explicitly interactive however, and organisational adjustments have been

made primarily in the interests of clarity according to the nature of the present analysis.

2.3 The Theoretical Basis of Communicative Language Teaching: Essential Facts

Communicative language teaching was the product of a major theoretical shift in applied linguistics, the motivation for which stemmed from a series of mutually reinforcing, multi-disciplinary developments (outlined in Chapter 4) each promoting in its own way a view of language as communication and emphasising the essential functionality of language by suggesting the inadequacy of approaches to language teaching which concerned themselves merely with its structural composition, or formal properties, while leaving unaccounted for other "rule systems which describe our knowledge of language *and how to operate with it*"(Brumfit, 1984. p. 24; my italics). To use Widdowson's distinction originally proposed in 1978, as a result of focusing on language *usage* ("the internalisation of grammar coupled with the exercise of linguistic skills in motor-perceptive manipulations" (1990, pp. 131-132)) and disregarding language *use* (the knowledge and ability to access and correctly apply linguistic and paralinguistic rules - such as those of appropriacy - in the context of specific and genuine communicative situations), earlier paradigms, and structuralism in particular, ultimately left learners all too often unable to realise the full communicative potential of the target language system; that is, they were unable to *proceduralize* their knowledge resource in order to get things done in the real world. Thus, despite often displaying impressive structural knowledge of the target language, learners were seen to be found wanting in their ability to communicate - and communicate appropriately - in authentic situations. Widdowson, in 1972, stated:

> The problem is that students, and especially students in developing countries, who have received several years of formal English teaching, frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language, and to understand its use, in normal communication, whether in spoken or written mode.
>
> (Widdowson 1972, p. 117)

It is a noteworthy yet frequently overlooked fact - one perhaps obscured by the overly severe reaction to pre-communicative approaches and methods - that the ability to communicate has *always been* the goal of language learning even in the case of now largely discredited methods. Indeed, Littlewood asserts as much when he comments:

> There is nothing new ...about the basic idea that communicative ability is the goal of foreign language learning. This is the assumption that underlies such widely used approaches as situational language teaching or the audio-lingual method. If developments since the 1970s have any special claim to the label' communicative', it is because the implications of this goal have been explored more thoroughly and explicitly than before.
>
> (Littlewood 1981, p. x).

In like vein, whilst similarly recognising the commonality of goal of the two linguistic traditions, Widdowson (1992, p. 313) characterises their difference in orientation via the notions of conceptual and contextual generalities and particulars. He notes: "In the first position (functionalism) learners are left to conceptualise from contextual particulars, in the second position (structuralism) learners are left to contextualize from conceptual generalities". Finally in this regard, Stern has stated: "It should be pointed out though that advocates of a structural approach were not unmindful of situations of language use. But the situations were left open and relatively undefined" (Stern 1983, p. 259).

Thus, the shift of emphasis in favour of a functional view of language represented a changing attitude not toward the ultimate product or target of language teaching/learning (which always had been and remained the learner's ability to successfully communicate - i.e. language *for* communication), but the way in which that product ought to influence the *process* of learning. So as to render it more effective and relevant to the goal of communication, the functionalist perspective now stressed the need to define this process according to:

(i) descriptions of the nature of communication and those parameters governing it. In other words, so as to better familiarise and equip learners to cope with the demands of authentic communication, the language learning environment would strive to provide them with opportunities for practice by reproducing as far as possible the spontaneity, dynamism, variability of context etc. this involved. Students would thus be learning language *as* and *through* communication.

(ii) (more specifically and within the framework of (i)), those ultimate uses to which the language would need to be put by the learner, consideration of which had previously almost exclusively governed the teaching of ESP where the relationship between the means and objectives of learning was most patent, though - it must be said - reflected more in subject matter than in learning procedures. This new concern with learning purpose led to syllabus objectives being tailored to respond to learner needs, a development exemplified by the appearance of Wilkins' notional-functional syllabus type (1972, 1976), and the Council of Europe's influential 'Threshold Level' document (Van Ek, 1975; Van Ek and Alexander, 1980) designed to "promote the integration of different language groups within the Common Market and to adapt L2 teaching to adults with a wide range of professional and social needs" (Savignon, 1983, p. 182). Van Ek specified learning objectives in the following terms:

> The situations in which the foreign language will be used including the topics which will be dealt with.
> The language activities in which the learner will engage.
> The language functions the learner will fulfil.
> What the learner will be able to do with each topic.
> The general notions which the learner will be able to handle.
> The specific (topic-related) notions which the learner will be able to handle.
> The language forms which the learner will be able to use.
> The degree of skill with which the learner will be able to perform.
>
> (Van Ek 1975, p. 5)

The need to adapt language teaching/learning, broadly, according to a description of the nature of authentic communication and those parameters regulating language use in whatever domain, inevitably raised a fundamental question regarding the precise characteristics of 'real world' communication and the conditions that needed to be met before a speaker of a language could be said to be *communicatively competent*. Until this question had been answered, any pedagogical approach claiming to promote functionalism in language teaching/learning needed to be treated with due caution, for its theoretical underpinnings would remain suspect. Following Morrow (1977), Breen and Candlin (1980) and Widdowson (1978), Canale (1983) lists seven general characteristics of authentic communication:

(a) It is a form of social interaction, and is therefore normally acquired and used in social interaction,

(b) it involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message,

(c) it takes place in discourse and socio-cultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues as to correct interpretations of utterances,

(d) it is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and distractions,

(e) it always has a purpose,

(f) it involves authentic language,

(g) it is judged successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes.

As we shall see in due course, a number of componential or parametrical accounts of communicative competence based on such descriptions and seeking to identify those areas of knowledge and ability required for 'successful' communication have been proposed, and it is with these - and Hymes's/Canale and Swain's in particular (1972/1980), updated by Canale in 1983) - that the guiding principles of CLT are very much associated.

We can say that in essence it is the construct of communicative competence, informed as it is by a cacophony of ideas originating from multifarious sources - academic, experiential and anecdotal - that lies at the theoretical heart of communicative language teaching, and which singularly defines the ultimate objective of those principles and techniques that operationalize it, and which have come to be closely associated with the approach. Hymes describes communicative competence as a competence "when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes 1972, p. 277). Allen, meanwhile, has defined it as the ability ...

> ...to produce coherent discourse which is situationally relevant, and to use language appropriately for the performance of a variety of 'semiotic acts' such as asking questions, making promises and predictions, giving orders, making statements and so on.
>
> (Allen 1975, p. 39)

Finally, Candlin articulates the notion of communicative competence in the following terms:

> ...the ability to create meanings by exploring the potential inherent in any language for continual modification in response to change, negotiating the value of convention rather than conforming to established principle. In sum, ...a coming together of organised knowledge structures with a set of procedures for adapting this knowledge to solve new problems of communication that do not have ready-made and tailored solutions.
>
> (Candlin 1986, p. 40)

2.4 Statements and Definitions of CLT: The Sense of Muddle and Indeterminacy, and a Call for Clarity

Despite there being widespread consensus as to the theoretical and practical issues and concerns which promoted and helped define a view of language as communication, and to the notion of communicative competence as the goal of language learning, detailed accounts offered of the principles and techniques of Communicative Language Teaching (see for example Morrow in Johnson and Morrow 1981, Richards and Rodgers 1986, Larsen-Freeman 1987) are, in contrast, striking in their lack of uniformity, clarity and consistency both within and across different accounts. Stern (1981) states:

> Communicative language teaching is not interpreted uniformly. There is indeed a good deal of uncertainty, if not to say, confusion as to what it is all about... and it is not at all clear how different approaches to communicative language teaching hang together, if at all...
>
> (Stern 1981, p. 133)

This lack of parity makes virtually impossible the establishment of one's own definition of the approach based on such interpretations. Any efforts to that end quickly become laboured, eventually grinding to a halt; the objective proves elusive, and what at first sight promises to be a fairly straightforward business quickly turns into an exercise in stress control from which one emerges bewildered and frustrated. The reasons for this would appear to be threefold:

Firstly, there exists no standard code of terminology employed consistently by different writers in their descriptions of language teaching proposals generally. This means that although two accounts of a proposal may actually make reference to similar notions, this is not always apparent.

Secondly, there is a widespread tendency to disregard (or perhaps a failure to perceive) any distinction between principles and application (techniques), with the result that the reader is bombarded with a hotch-potch of ideas that are meaningless in that they give no indication of the rationale motivating them and therefore of their relevance/relationship to the overall framework of the approach. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983), for example, speak of "features" of communicative language teaching, a frequently adopted umbrella term used to refer jointly to principles and techniques. Where distinctions between these two aspects *are* made, they appear to be made on different bases according to presenter, with the result that what is a *principle* for one may be a *technique* for another. Given the terminology problem, this muddies the waters still further.

Thirdly, even if one *is* able to achieve a measure of clarity by separating out the various ideas buried in these accounts according to levels (1) and (2) of the framework outlined above, it becomes evident that certain of them are not common to all such accounts. This state of affairs is very much reflected in Richards and Rodgers' references to "most CLT interpretations" (1986, p. 68), "...the relatively varied way in which it is interpreted and applied" (pg. 69), and, more explicitly, to there being "...no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative" (p.66). The upshot of this variability is that one is left wondering just what is and is not essential to any account of CLT.

While these issues do raise important questions as to the basis on which theorists and pedagogues are able to discuss 'CLT' meaningfully given the likelihood that they will not share a strictly common frame of reference, there are, nevertheless, a number of principles which, granted a small measure of interpretative licence, do appear to feature in almost all accounts of the communicative approach and which might thus be said to constitute a basic core of universally acknowledged - though as will become evident, not always theoretically informed - tenets. These are paraphrased below and, as I later seek to show, inevitably overlap and inter-relate to some degree, with certain key underlying concepts, such as that of authenticity, proving vague and/or problematical.

2.5 Communicative Language Teaching: Common Principles

(1) *Authenticity in language learning*: In 1976, Wilkins, a contributor to the Council of Europe's Threshold Syllabus project, stated:

> ...in language courses generally, but in courses based on a notional syllabus in particular, much more attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of a receptive competence , and an important feature of materials designed to produce such a competence would be authentic language materials.
>
> (Wilkins 1976, p. 79)

The principle of authenticity states that the language learning environment should as far as possible replicate those conditions characteristic of naturalistic communication. This idea might be said to be dominant in the sense that it infiltrates or is implicit in all other principles of the approach. Hence, a more precise insight into the implicative nature of the authenticity principle and what it is generally taken by proponents of the approach to stand for, may be gleaned through a description of these other 'subordinate' principles of communicative language teaching:

(2) *Accuracy is subordinate to fluency*: Fluency and acceptable language is seen as primary in that structural correctness is not always a sufficient condition for successful communication. Students need to be able to answer to the contingencies of a dynamic and spontaneous communicative exchange, something highly controlled structural methods such as audiolingualism with its emphasis on error-avoidance and habit-formation failed to adequately address.

(3) *Form is subordinate to meaning*: Closely allied to the accuracy-fluency principle, this principle stresses the successful negotiation of meaning, by whatever means, as the focus and goal of authentic communication. If this is achieved - even at the expense of grammatical or phonological correctness - then the communicative potential of language is seen to have been realised. It is on this basis that students' success is determined. Davies has stated:

> The cutting edge of the communicative movement... has been to emphasise the priority of meaning before form, that is to say that the language acquirer gains linguistic form by first seeking situational meaning.
>
> (Davies 1991, p. 12)

The surge in error analysis work (e.g. Corder 1967, 1974) and interlanguage studies (e.g. Selinker 1972, Selinker and Lamendella 1981) that occurred during the establishment of CLT played a significant part in helping de-emphasise accuracy and form in language teaching while promoting the "semantic and communicative dimension ...of language" (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p. 17). The accuracy-fluency/form-meaning principles highlight the impact such undertakings had on the development of the approach.

The following tenets are essentially spin-offs of these two principles:

- (a) *Errors are tolerated as a natural part of the learning process*: If fluency and meaning are to be stressed as primary according to their role in natural communication, and if (as CLT assumes) second language learning reflects first in the nature of the developmental processes involved, and in particular the apparent necessity of trial and error - a facet of learning in general - then learners, it is argued, ought to be encouraged to negotiate meaning through employing whatever knowledge and strategies they have at their disposal. They should then be assessed in part according to how effectively they do so rather than (more negatively) on the frequency and nature of their errors. Allwright observes:

> This principle is not a minor technical detail but one of the very foundations of the strategy because directing the learner's attention to the formal correctness of his utterances means diverting it from what ought to be his main concern, the expression and negotiation of meanings.
>
> (Allwright 1977; in Brumfit and Johnson 1979)

- (b) *Comprehensible pronunciation is sought*: Although in downplaying phonological correctness this principle indirectly supports that of minimising error correction, it is generally treated independently of it, perhaps because unlike the areas of grammar and appropriacy, pronunciation lends itself less to categorisation in terms of *correct Vs. incorrect*, and is collectively better represented in terms of an *incomprehensible — excellent* (NS-like) continuum. While CLT de-

emphasises native speaker-like pronunciation for reasons of priority - the development of fluency and a receptive affective state taking precedence - and not because it is ultimately undesirable, there are those who suggest that it may well be to the learner's advantage to maintain some remnant of a foreign accent. Davies speaks of "performing too well in a foreign language" and claims "a foreign accent may be a good badge to display - 'Don't expect me to share all your cultural assumptions'" (1989, p. 159). Widdowson (1992, p. 311) makes a similar point in suggesting that completely authentic language could be deemed undesirable in cases where "the (target language) community itself may resent the claim to membership and close ranks against the impostor. There are advantages in retaining the status of stranger" (my insert).

- (c) *Language should be viewed as a means to an end, not an end in itself*: Implicit in this principle is a rejection of a belief common in the past - particularly in relation to Latin in the Western world - that language learning could be a worthwhile academic pursuit regardless of whether or not it had any practical application. In contrast, the communicative approach emphasises the fact that language *is essentially* communication and that authentic communication is always purposeful. We learn language in order to do things (to interact with the world around us), and not for its own sake. This emphasis on the ends of learning was again already very much in evidence within the narrower context of ESP where the issue of relevance was clearly crucial. Furthermore, it was reflected in the Council of Europe's conducting of a needs analysis as the first step toward creating the Threshold Level syllabus.

(4) *Students work with language at the discourse level*: This principle is concerned with the effective negotiation of meaning via an understanding of the total context, physical and linguistic, in which communication occurs. That is, it emphasises the notion of meaning as a function of the relationship between language and context, and as such, stresses the need for an understanding of those rules governing cohesion, coherence and appropriacy, as well as presuppositional, inferential and referential skills and the ability to access schemata derived from prior experience of like situations. The concern with discourse function as an important part of the CLT ethos came largely in response to objections levelled against the Council of Europe that it had merely correlated certain linguistic forms or

utterances with particular functions and in this respect had improved little upon those inventory-like specifications of structural units it sought to supersede. If meaning was to be achieved and speech acts correctly interpreted, single utterances needed to be related to the broader textual environment, a realisation which led to the increased prominence of the notions of negotiated meaning, language *across* utterances, long turns, and discourse strategies.

Although Swan (1985) correctly suggests any such skills which underlie the ability to achieve meaning are universal, it is quite evident that the framework within which they operate is language specific. In any given context, the relative settings of those parameters which govern language use will vary not just across languages, but also to a lesser degree within them according to social group, speech community, and even the individual. One can quote a myriad instances of the kind of inter-linguistic variation with which we are primarily concerned here and which the learner has to familiarise himself with over time if he is to function effectively, understand intended meaning and achieve a productive and receptive coherence in the L2. In Japan, for example, the ostensibly sympathetic comment from a neighbour that "Your baby must keep you awake all night!" might actually disguise a complaint that the baby is being too noisy and disturbing *her*, the neighbour. Such intended meanings are often lost on the novice to Japan. In other words, language learners need, among other things, to acquire an understanding of the relationship between overt and covert meaning, for this relationship can differ radically between languages.

(5) *Opportunities should exist for interaction*: If learners are to cope with authentic communication, they need to be able to respond to the contingencies of an ongoing exchange. It is maintained - correctly I shall later argue - that interactive activities requiring participants to negotiate meaning provide learners with practice at doing precisely this, as well as opportunities to develop survival strategies and communication enhancement techniques. In the words of Di Pietro:

> ...the classroom turns into a proving ground where such challenges (i.e. to reach goals through verbal exchanges with others) are faced and overcome with the aid of the teacher and the co-operation of other learners.
>
> (Di Pietro 1987, p. 10; my parenthetic insertion).

This constitutes a process of linking what Donato (1985, in Di Pietro) terms the "internal mind" (here interpretable as 'knowledge') and the "external world" (the ability to access and apply that knowledge in authentic contexts of communication). It is this process that enables learning to take place and thus the language learner to respond effectively to the uncertainties and spontaneity characteristic of so much communication.

(6) *Linguistic variation should be encouraged*: This principle helps ensure that learners are better prepared for the unpredictability that characterises native-speaker speech. Whilst much of what we say does undoubtedly consist of high-frequency chunks and what Gleason (1982) terms "prefabricated routines" from which there is little deviation, there exists nonetheless a good deal of variety in terms of *use* and *usage* both across dialects and within them. Learners with a spectrum of semantically similar lexical items and expressions in their repertoire might reasonably be judged better able to comprehend what they hear as well as articulate thoughts and ideas more precisely and appropriately.

(7) *The culture as well as the language needs to be taught*: This emphasises the idea that successful communication in a language requires more than the mastery of its grammar. It involves an understanding of those socio-cultural realities affecting language use and thus also - at some level - of speech acts, context and discourse dynamics. The theoretical origins of this idea are discussed in Chapter 4.

The following three principles illustrate the close association of CLT with affective elements in learning. In the 1970s the role of the affect became the subject of a growing number of studies (e.g. Gardner and Lambert 1972; Guiora et al 1972a, 1972b; Rossier 1976). which served to add buoyancy to those humanistic teaching/learning techniques such as The Silent Way (Gattegno 1972), Suggestopedia (Bancroft 1972; Lozanov 1978) and Community Language Learning (Curran 1972, 1976) which placed a greater emphasis on the language learner, and in particular his receptivity to the L2 and the learning process in general. Principles 8, 9 and 10 indicate that these techniques were very much in tune with the ethos of the communicative approach to language teaching and as such likely provided it with further momentum.

(8) *Sequencing should be determined by what is meaningful and relevant/of interest to the students*: To reiterate, we are motivated to communicate

not for its own sake, but by the desire to achieve some outcome or set of outcomes in the world through interaction with those around us. Were this desire to be taken away altogether, communication would, for all intents and purposes, naturally cease. While, clearly, what is relevant (a goal oriented learning criterion) is not *necessarily* motivating, by sequencing material according to what is *meaningful* and *of interest* to the learner (a process oriented learning criteria), it follows - so the argument goes - that motivation should naturally be enhanced, theoretically resulting in increased learning. Simply put, learning takes place in proportion to motivation levels which in turn exist to a greater or lesser degree according to - among other things - the meaningfulness, interest and, sometimes, relevance of the content to the learner. Thus, in a rather different sense, the ends of learning can again be seen to be acting upon or influencing the means of learning.

(9) *All exchanges and activities should have a purpose*: This is essentially an extension of principles 3(c) and 8 and would seem to refer to any activities that involve learners in using the language as a way of accomplishing some task as opposed to learning about the language. It might be noted that form-focused activities and purposeful learning are not strictly speaking mutually exclusive realms, and that even the much maligned 'mim-mem' drills of audiolingualism were undeniably purpose oriented in the sense that they were designed to increase control and fluency, and ultimately improve the learner's practical ability to communicate and do things with the language. Where they differed significantly, however, was again in their reliance upon the process of investment in the linguistic code and the idea that considerable structural knowledge allied with fluency acquired through practice (drilling etc.) would pay off by enabling the learner to effectively utilise these resources *regardless of the nature of the situation in which he might find himself.* That is, in structural methods there was a delayed purpose to learning distinct from the immediate purpose underlying the kinds of task-based activities characteristic of communicative language teaching and seen as essential to exposing the learner - and thus helping him adjust - to the realities of authentic communication, as well as to maintaining motivation levels.

(10) *Classrooms should be learner-centred*: In referring to this and principle (8), Mitchell (1988, p. 3) speaks of a "commitment to individualisation of the syllabus, to the democratisation of the teacher-pupil relationship, and

to 'learner autonomy'". This is perhaps the principle most clearly manifested in 'communicative' textbooks and which breaks away most radically from earlier methods and approaches. Underlying it is the idea that we best learn to communicate by becoming participants in authentic communicative situations and experiencing the kinds of constraints these impose. This cannot be done merely through the grammar-translation exercises, drills and other activities typical of *teacher-fronted* classrooms; instead, what are called for are the kinds of group/pair work oriented learning situations associated with role-play, information gap activities, language games etc., and which reflect the need to adjust to different sets of contextual conditions as well as to the dynamics and spontaneity of natural communication. Littlewood states:

> Language learning takes place inside the language learner and, as teachers know to their frequent frustration, many aspects of it are beyond their pedagogical control. It is likely, in fact, that many aspects of language learning can take place only through natural processes, which operate when a person is involved in using the language for communication.
>
> (Littlewood 1981, pp. 17-18)

- (a) Learner autonomy: Very much part of principles (9) and (10), the notion of learner autonomy further emphasises a concern with the learner's psychological state. It maintains that opportunities should exist for learners to initiate communication, freely negotiate meaning, express ideas and opinions, choose how (within the bounds of their competence) they wish to express themselves and their personality, and develop their own strategies for dealing with natural language. CLT thus gives recognition to the essential personalness of language. In allowing the learner a degree of control over his use of language, what Brumfit terms "language-like behaviour" is avoided:

> Language is impossible to acquire if the product is predefined; what will then be acquired is merely language-like behaviour.
>
> (Brumfit 1984, p. 123)

Finally, it is noteworthy that the concern CLT displays with the affect through these three principles (8, 9 & 10) is very much a reflection of Hymes's original concern with 'performance' and the ability to access knowledge of the L2 in communication. He has stated:

> Certainly, it may be the case that individuals differ with regard to ability to use knowledge of each (of the systems of rules governing

language use): to interpret, differentiate etc. The specification of ability for use as part of competence allows for the role of non-cognitive factors, such as motivations, as partly determining competence.

(Hymes 1972, pp. 282-3; my parenthetic insertion).

2.6 The Pedagogical Application: Translating Principles into Classroom Techniques/Activities

The following comprises a set of techniques and activities commonly referred to in ESOL teacher-training materials and textbooks and generally accepted as an inherent part of the communicative package. It is based on Littlewood's (1981) typology which in turn is based upon a distinction between the two main roles of language in communication: as a functional instrument and as a form of social behaviour. Littlewood's arrangement is particularly convenient in that it gives order to a series of techniques and activities commonly quoted indiscriminately as features of the communicative approach without any regard being given to their internal organisation or interconnectedness. Accounts typically refer to scrambled sentences, picture strip stories, group work and pair work activities, problem-solving activities, interactive activities, language games, information-gap activities, role-play, drama etc. without attempting in any way to separate these into generic types. This lack of structure as well as uniformity in what different accounts specify as "communicative activities" inevitably makes it difficult to embark upon the kind of assessment attempted in Chapter 3 of the theoretical justification for such activities.

2.6.1 Functional Communication Activities

These activities are geared towards encouraging learners to autonomously and creatively use the target language - and one supposes in certain cases the paralinguistic means - they have at their disposal, in order to complete a specified task; that is they set goals which involve learners coming up with a definite solution or decision. These goals they have in common with the kinds of language-oriented activities characteristic of structural approaches to language teaching; however they differ, *theoretically*, in the communicative nature of the means they permit learners to exercise in

order to achieve those goals. However, it must be said that in practice activities presented as "communicative" frequently only superficially allow any kind of autonomy. In reality language is often over-controlled and the completion of tasks involves little more than the application of pre-set patterns of behaviour and turn-taking, with substitutions constituting the limit of 'creativity'. In essence, many functional communication (and indeed social interaction) activities resemble all too closely the kinds of repetitive and uncreative drills they were designed to replace.

(a) *Sharing information with restricted co-operation*: These activities elicit the simplest patterns of interaction, one learner being privy to information the other(s) must discover. The knower is not allowed to co-operate fully, providing information only in response to appropriate cues and thereby sustaining the interaction and thus opportunities to negotiate meaning. Since learners must interact according to strict rules, it is often possible for the teacher to go as far as specifying the actual language structures that they should use; and this means the activity becomes what Littlewood describes as a "communicative form of controlled language practice" (Littlewood ibid., p. 23), for which the learners can be specifically equipped with the language they need. Given that the teacher maintains a degree of control over structures used, these types of activities are 'communicative' only to the extent that they (i) allow for flexibility and individual variability around the required structures, and (ii) involve the kind of information gap negotiation characteristic of certain authentic communicative situations.

(b) *Sharing information with unrestricted co-operation*: These promote the development of more complex patterns of communication, for whilst the information gap is maintained, verbal restrictions are waived and visual ones imposed with participants unable, for example, to see each others' pictures. As Littlewood points out, this category may also include activities of category (a) provided the teacher is willing to sacrifice control over language used in favour of more creative interaction.

(c) *Sharing and processing information*: In this type of activity, in addition to sharing information, learners must also discuss or evaluate it in order to solve a problem. Many of the activities work according to what Littlewood terms the "jigsaw principle", where each participant possesses

information unique to him and which he must share with the others in order to complete the task.

(d) *Processing Information*: This kind of activity dispenses altogether with the need to share information, the learners having access to all relevant facts. It is for this reason that Littlewood chooses not to refer to them as 'games', preferring presumably to limit that term's application to *challenging* or *competitive* forms of play or sport. The need to discuss and evaluate the facts provided, in pairs or groups, in order to solve a problem or reach a decision is what provides the stimulus for communication.

2.6.2 Social Interaction Activities

Social interaction activities are more open-ended in nature than their counterparts and emphasise the situational variability in language use and the need to focus on the social as well as the functional meanings conveyed by language.

(e) *The Classroom as a Social Context*: In describing the potential of the classroom to be used itself as a social context essentially of the kind found in the 'real world' and similarly bound by its own code of engagement, register etc., Littlewood tells us that "Language structures and communicative functions are not bound to specific situations: once they have been mastered so that they can be used creatively, they can be transferred to contexts other than the one where they were initially acquired" (Littlewood 1981, p. 44). It is not entirely clear how this process of generalisation proceeds; presumably the learner - and indeed the native/native-like speaker - identifies commonalities between different situations of language use, relates these to a particular function, and then selects the kind of language associated with and appropriate to that function. However, if, instead of the mere memorisation of a series of routines and the rigid association of certain forms with particular functions, true learning is to take place and students are to become equipped with the means of generalising what is learnt in the limited context of the classroom to situations outside of it, then classroom activities need to sensitise learners to features of context in order that they can correctly make associations between experiences of similar - though inevitably never identical - situations, and adjust their language accordingly. This is largely, though not entirely, a matter of drawing upon

processes well developed in their first language. Although notions and functions improved somewhat upon situational language teaching by allowing for greater generalisability and equating certain kinds of language with generic situational types, there remains the need for learners to go one step further by learning to draw situational parallels based on previous experience. Classroom techniques can promote this learning process, but the process itself is infinite in that even native speakers are continually refining it, a point returned to in Chapter 5.

(f) *Simulation and Role-Playing*: In these activities, learners imagine a situation which could occur outside the classroom. They take on a specific role in that situation either acting as themselves or adopting a simulated identity, and are required to behave in accordance with their roles as though the situation were real. Cued dialogues, role-playing (including debates/discussions) and improvisation all feature in this category, each of them encouraging the kind of creativity associated with communicative language use.

2.6.3 Authenticity is to Principles as Group Work/Pair Work is to Practices

What becomes evident from this description of the techniques and activities commonly pursued in response to the call for "communicative classrooms" is that just as authenticity was the dominant or most basic principle of CLT in that it encapsulated or interlinked in some way with all others, so group work and pair work activities are 'primary' at the level of pedagogical application in that all other techniques and activities specified involve recourse to learning situations where two or more students are interacting in some form or other according to adjustments in the participants' relative access to knowledge or information sources. Given the goals of CLT and the approach's implicit recognition that the product of learning ought to inform the process, this is perhaps not surprising. However, it is worth noting at this point that if group work is to be a major feature of the communicative classroom, then at least two questions of psychological significance need to be addressed. The first concerns individual learner differences - frequently articulated in terms of *cognitive style,* and the second the social psychology of the way groups actually work. With regard to learner differences, a number of dimensions

of cognitive style have been identified, these generally being presented as dichotomies. They include field-independence/field-dependence(FI/FD), verbal/imaginal, analytic/relational, serialist/holist, and sequential-successive/simultaneous synthesis.[1] As Ellis (1985) notes, it is the first dichotomy (FI/FD) that has received most attention.

Once we accept that the kind of learner variability these analyses represent exists, we have then to reconcile this with aspects of methodology, such as group work, which assume a collectivity. In other words, is it justifiable to operate according to the idea that even if learners do not all follow the exact same strategies, those strategies that they individually employ are somehow consistent with each other to a degree that warrants the implementation of group work as an effective means of learning?

So too with the selection of communicative task type. Learners with different cognitive styles will approach similar tasks differently, and this ought to raise the question in the teacher's mind as to which cognitive style the particular task selected appeals to; what kind of reasoning it requires. If it is *not* suited to a particular learner or group of learners, then they are presumably going to lose out to some extent for they will be forced to reason in a way which is counter-intuitive and therefore less efficient/effective for them.

With regard to the broader question of the social psychology of functioning in groups, there needs to be some appreciation of when, why and how group activity can be of benefit to the language learning process, and this again raises concomitant questions concerning not merely issues of cognitive style, but also those of personality, attitude etc. That is, group work needs to be promoted for sound educational reasons and on the basis of insights provided by psychology, *not* as the result of pressure to conform to the kind of prevailing ideology or socio-political ethos identified in Chapter 1 as an *external force of paradigm change*. Where the two are not in agreement, findings in social-psychology must be made to hold sway over vague platitudes concerning individual rights, devolving responsibility to the learner and notions of anti-authoritarianism.

It is doubtless idealistic to suppose that it is possible to accurately identify and consistently reconcile all cognitive styles, personality types etc. present in a particular classroom, while also allowing for variety and stimulation. Nevertheless, the issue of the need to question assumptions

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1 See Hartnett (1985) for a discussion of these dichotomies.

about certain kinds of classroom dynamics and activities in light of their compatibility with individual learner differences remains a valid one which again signals the need to bring to bear and carefully appraise the validity and relevance of the various tangential sub-disciplines (linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics etc.) of the language teaching enterprise.

2.6.4 Similar Concepts, Different Terminology

Whilst Littlewood arguably offers the clearest and most wide-ranging, all-encompassing account of CLT activities in his typology, other theorists writing broadly within the communicative paradigm have also made reference to various activity types, e.g. Clarke (1987), Pattison (1987) and Prabhu (1987). However, their typologies frequently exhibit either different terminology or a different focus. Nunan notes this of Clark's and Pattison's accounts which, he states, "...are quite different. Clark focuses on the sorts of uses to which we put the language in the real world, while Pattison has a much more pedagogic focus (1989, p. 68). Thus again we are faced with the problem of uniformity and the resultant difficulty of being unable to compare and contrast these accounts and establish firmly whether there is a methodological prototype of CLT, and if so what its characteristics are. In outlining the kinds of activities that feature in his task-based 'procedural' syllabus, Prabhu (1987), for example, refers to "information gap activities" which seem to constitute a generic type incorporating three of Littlewood's four "functional communication activities." Likewise with his "reasoning-gap" and "opinion-gap activities" (see Figure 2). Prabhu, significantly, has no equivalent to Littlewood's Social Interaction Activities, for as he himself states:

> The focus of the (Bangalore) project was not... on 'communicative competence' (in the restricted sense of achieving social or situational appropriacy, as distinct from grammatical conformity) but rather on grammatical competence itself, which was hypothesised to develop in the course of meaning-focused activity.
>
> (Prabhu 1987, p. 1; my parenthetic insert)

This illustrates that a lack of equivalence among different accounts may in certain instances be put down to different teaching/learning goals according to different contexts of instruction, and should not

automatically be taken as evidence of differing perceptions of what constitutes communicative methodology.

Widdowson's "accessibility-acceptability" distinction appears to correspond quite neatly to Littlewood's functional communication-social interaction distinction, social interaction activities involving the development and application of perceptions about what is and is not socially acceptable, regardless of its formal correctness and accessibility.

Finally, Brown and Yule's twofold division of the functions of language into *transactional* and *interactional* (1983, pp. 1-4), while a commentary on language in general and not communicative language teaching in particular, nor specifically activities associated with the approach, does nevertheless once again approximate functional communication and social-interaction activities respectively. Thus functional communication activities are geared more toward what Brown and Yule refer to as the "expression of 'content'" (transacting) and the development of the ability to do this effectively, whilst social interaction activities involve more the expression of "social relations and personal attitudes" (interacting) and an increased appreciation by the learner of the role of these factors in language use.

Although clearly there are common concepts here being alluded to by these different writers, a lack of standard terminology and any statements making explicit the criteria used for categorisation has obscured this fact and only exacerbated the sense of chaos and disorganisation surrounding CLT.

FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES "Transactional" (Brown/Yule) "Accessibility"-Oriented (Widdowson)	Sharing Information with Restricted Co-operation Sharing Information with Unrestricted Co-operation Sharing and Processing Information Processing Information	"Information Gap" Activities (Prabhu)	"Reasoning Gap" Activities (Prabhu)	
SOCIAL INTERACTION ACTIVITIES "Interactional" (Brown & Yule) "Acceptability"-Oriented (Widdowson)	The Classroom as Social Context Simulation and Role-Playing			"Opinion Gap" Activities (Prabhu)

Language Use and the Classroom Activities Designed to Reflect it :
A Comparison of Terminology

Figure 2

2.7 Spoken Versus Written Communication

We may question the above principles and techniques in terms of (i) whether they are internally consistent, and (ii) whether, given the approach's theoretical impetus and principles respectively, they are necessary or contingent in nature. Before attempting to embark upon this endeavour, however, a final point concerning definitions:

From this overview, it becomes evident that *language as and for communication* is generally understood by communicativists to mean *spoken* communication rather than written; that is, communication where there exists an overt, reciprocal relationship between the participants themselves rather than between reader and text. In light of the origins and historical development of the approach, and in particular the practical concerns which helped instigate it (e.g. learners emerging from programmes of instruction with a precise control of the target language code, yet with an often severe oral-aural ability deficit), this is perhaps not surprising. However, while they appear to be no less valid a learning enterprise - especially given their influence on the spoken word - the status of literacy skills within the communicative tradition (i.e. the kinds of meaning negotiation strategies needed for effectively encoding and accessing meaning in the literacy mode) has been inadequately pursued as an issue in the literature and thus by and large remains unclear, with the result, I shall later argue, that a potentially powerful resource, enabling language teachers to apply communicative principles more flexibly and appropriately according to cultural context, has been overlooked.

2.8 A Summary and Preview

This chapter has, in the main, sought to identify the salient and, I believe, near-universally acknowledged features of communicative language teaching. While it has perhaps at times provided hints of the kind of confusion and entropy that surrounds the approach, it is the purpose of Chapter 3 to provide the basis of a more thoroughgoing critical appraisal of those features.

Chapter 3

THE STATE AND STATUS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (II)

Some Problems and Controversies

3.1 Introduction

The analysis that follows offers an assessment of communicative language teaching in terms of (i) inconsistencies inherent in its fundamental principles as identified in Chapter 2, and (ii) the necessary or contingent nature of those principles with respect to the theoretical ethos that spawned them, and of the pedagogical practices of the approach with respect to the principles which they are thought to realise.

3.2 Questions of Consistency

Communicativists might be accused of inconsistency on a number of counts most of which concern the idea of authenticity as central to the learning process. Thus, the principle of authenticity would appear to be at odds, for example, with that of learner-centredness and learner autonomy for the following reason. 'Authenticity' is, by definition, native-speaker behaviour in communication, and ought to be - so adherents of the communicative approach claim - a characteristic of the language learning environment. Central to the notion of learner autonomy is the idea that learners should make the target language their own. However, if indeed they do so, then they are by definition *not* being authentic - for their linguistic competence falls short of that of a native speaker - and are therefore compromising the authenticity principle. In other words, it seems nonsensical to simultaneously demand of the learning environment authentic language and learner autonomy in language use. One might also argue, though perhaps less convincingly, that if an authentic environment is indispensable to CLT, then it makes a nonsense of any need to learn - and therefore also of the notion of 'teacher as

counsellor/resource person' - for it would have to presuppose native speaker-like ability on the part of all those participants directly engaged in the activities of teaching and learning. Even if one accepts that total authenticity is an unreasonable target and that the environmental demands of communicativists are in fact rather less absolute, it is inevitable that the kinds of constraints the learner's interlanguage imposes on communication will alter the dynamics of any exchange and push the discourse away from a naturalistic mode.

The authenticity principle is also undermined in another way by the principles of learner-centredness, minimal error correction, sequencing according to what is meaningful/relevant to the students, and possibly also comprehensible pronunciation (where accepting NNS-like pronunciation is in part seen as a way of helping minimise identity-related conflict in the learner). Each of these four principles share a manifest concern with the psychological set or affective state of the learner and the desire to increase his motivation and, in Dulay and Burt's (1977) and Krashen's (1982) terms, lower the "affective filter". The desire to create authentic learning conditions, on the other hand, appears to disregard any consideration of the learner's psychological state. Again, how the two aspects may be reconciled is unclear.

The subordination of form to meaning (principle 3 above) appears to be incompatible with the idea that linguistic variation should be encouraged (principle 6). It is difficult to see how native speakers - let alone foreign language learners - can attempt to introduce variation into their speech repertoire without focusing predominantly on form from time to time. This also raises the tangential issue of whether it is ever possible, or indeed always desirable, to maintain the primacy of meaning in communication, and how we are able to know if and when there is a switch of focus from form to meaning or vice-versa. Such questions must again inevitably relate to the issue of authenticity.

The relationship between authenticity and the emphasis placed by communicativists on fluency and meaning is also somewhat ambiguous, for while the rationale underlying each of the elements appears sound enough given the product-informs-process orientation of CLT, the drive toward authenticity may at times dictate a primary focus on form and accuracy, in say the negotiation of a sensitive issue or situation where the way in which something is said may be crucial to the outcome and to the impression we give of ourselves. At issue here is the danger of absolutes

in the establishment of principles, and also the problem, once more, of being able to correctly perceive where the primary focus of the learner really is.

3.3 Necessities Versus Contingencies

3.3.1 From Theoretical Impetus to Principles

This section assesses the nature of the relationships between the theoretical ethos that informs the communicative principles of language teaching and the principles themselves. In doing so, it seeks to establish whether those principles are necessary or contingent derivatives of the theoretical ethos.

(i) *The principle of authenticity*: In section 2.3, reference was made to the emphasis placed by adherents of CLT on the need "...to better familiarise and equip learners to cope with the demands of authentic communication" as a prerequisite of communicative competence. In creating an authentic learning environment, the syllabus designer/teacher is unquestionably facilitating the accomplishment of this goal by forcing learners to resort to and develop coping strategies collectively termed "strategic competence" by Canale and Swain (1980) and succinctly defined by Savignon as:

> The ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue, distraction, inattention; the effective use of coping strategies to sustain or enhance communication.
>
> (Savignon 1983, p. 310)

Whether facilitating the accomplishment of communicative competence makes authenticity a necessary condition of learning, however, is open to question. While all other areas of competence (outlined in Chapter 4) are essentially knowledge resources and can be learnt as such without recourse to communicative activity, authentic or otherwise, their successful application *in communication* depends upon what Hymes terms the learner's *ability*. This refers to his capacity to tap that resource under the performance constraints imposed by real-life contexts of communication. Advocates of the communicative approach would no

doubt argue, by and large, that such capacity can be maximally developed *only* if the learner is engaged in authentic communication whether inside or outside the classroom, for only under those conditions is he exposed to the kind of idiosyncrasy and uncertainty characteristic of real engagements, and thereby prompted to develop his ability to respond successfully.

It seems entirely plausible, however, that this ability to answer to and modify language and behaviour in the face of contingencies arising inevitably from one's interactions with others is something that can be nurtured through activities such as those outlined by Littlewood and Prabhu, yet while operating in a distinctly inauthentic context. In a sense the authenticity or otherwise of the learning context is irrelevant; what is important is that it promotes the kinds of mental or processing abilities required in order to deal on-line with the unexpected in communication and access whatever communicative resources the learner has at his disposal. In real contexts of language use there always exists this element of the unexpected and, indeed, native speakers are themselves constantly refining their ability to deal with it. This fact suggests that the authenticity required is one having to do with the process of learning (i.e. strategy development) rather than the product of learning, and the presence of an authentic context, for all intents and purposes, merely provides one of a number of possible learning contexts in which such development may take place.

The learner devoid of strategies that allow him to operate in the target language can be said to have only latent knowledge as far as all other areas of competence are concerned, for it is his strategic competence which permits him to bring his 'intellectual' understanding of the L2 to bear in performance contexts; to "...implement the components of language competence in contextualized communicative language use" (Bachman 1990, p. 84). In this respect strategic competence might therefore reasonably be regarded as the most crucial - though clearly not sufficient - aspect underlying CLT. Moreover, it is a concept which appears to have the support of psycholinguistic theory, and specifically Bialystok's (1982) account of learner variability in terms of two orthogonal dimensions underlying linguistic knowledge: analysed knowledge and cognitive control (measured according to degrees of automaticity of access). In discussing this idea subsequently, Bialystok and Sharwood-Smith (1985) point out that having linguistic knowledge does not imply control over,

or access to that knowledge in particular situational contexts - hence the distinctness of the two dimensions. It is thus the mechanisms that Bialystok and Sharwood-Smith argue govern the access parameter which seem in some respects to mirror the notion of strategic competence, for both notions refer to the cognitive constraints on our ability to proceduralise whatever declarative knowledge we have (see Faerch and Kasper 1984).

It is interesting to note that Canale and Swain see the value of authenticity as lying in its ability to take students from being communicatively competent to being communicatively confident. They state:

> Exposure to realistic situations is crucial if communicative competence is to lead to communicative confidence.
>
> (Canale and Swain 1980, p. 38)

This suggests that communicative competence is in fact a precondition of communicative confidence (which I take to mean the psychological preparedness and thus on-line practical ability to deal with authentic communication) and is not presupposed by it. One is left wondering, however, what communicative competence might then sensibly be if, as Canale and Swain imply, it is not the attitude/ability to deal with authentic communication!

(ii) *The subordination of accuracy to fluency and form to meaning*: The interdependence of these two principles and the consequent similarities in the nature of their relationship to the underlying ethos of CLT allows these two features of the approach to be dealt with simultaneously for present purposes.

The subordination of accuracy to fluency and form to meaning are principles which derive, as do most CLT principles, from the observed characteristics of authentic communication. Littlewood (1981, pp. 88-89) states that "we normally focus our attention primarily on the meaning of what we say or hear, rather than on its linguistic form", and while we "make conscious decisions about the messages we want to convey ...the lower-level choices of structure and vocabulary occur more or less automatically". As Littlewood is careful to point out, every speaker at some time or other focuses his attention on form when, for example, a message is particularly complex or a situation especially formal or sensitive. Where his account - and numerous others - is misleading,

however, is in its suggestion that form focus and meaning focus are inversely proportional and that where there is more of one there is less of the other. Surely in authentic, spontaneous communication - although not necessarily in learning - we are always focused (and focused *primarily*) on meaning, for message ultimately lies at the heart of any exchange regardless of how it is expressed; indeed the reason we so frequently fret over the way in which we structure what we say is due to our concern with the kind of message or impression we leave our listener/reader. On the other hand we *regulate* our attention to form according to the situation in which we find ourselves. In a job interview, for example, we adjust the register of our language so as to appear good prospective employees, and the ability to do this through understanding expectations associated with that particular context of use and selecting and organising our language accordingly, is a mark of fluency.

Thus form and meaning would appear to be better represented as two separate dimensions operating in parallel to one another rather than as a continuum with form at one of its extremities and meaning at the other. While the meaning dimension remains fairly constant, the form dimension fluctuates to a much greater extent.

This situation becomes conceptually clearer if one does away with the "form-meaning" opposition which creates the misleading impression of a continuum-based dynamic, and refers instead to *semantic* and *pragmatic meaning*. This terminology captures the fact that while meaning is *always* present regardless of the nature of the linguistic activity, in one case (semantic meaning) it is what Widdowson (1990, p. 99) terms "virtual meaning", "...meaning seen in terms of a potential contained within linguistic forms" (ibid., p. 117), whereas pragmatic meaning has to do with "actual meaning" and "...the procedures and contextual conditions that come into play in order for this potential to be realised". The two types are not in opposition, yet the "form-meaning" distinction distorts that reality much as the structural-functional linguistics distinction has misled people into thinking that structural methods were not concerned with communication (re. section 2.3).

Given, then, that in natural communication we focus invariably on pragmatic meaning (PM) and for the most part minimally on semantic meaning (SM), and that the central motivation underlying CLT is the development of communicative competence in the language learner - i.e. the ability to replicate those processes and procedures the native or native-

like speaker engages in during communication - then the primacy of fluency/PM and the normally minimal attention to SM and the grammatical properties of language would seem to be a self-evident - and in this respect necessary - feature of the approach.

Complications, however, arise from a blurring of the distinction between the process and the goals of learning, which has, I suggest, bred a confusion in conceptualisation, and lies behind many of the ills currently afflicting CLT. In the various accounts of the approach that have been proposed, it is not entirely clear whether the primacy of fluency/PM refers solely to the *goal* of language teaching/learning - that is, to the production of learners who are able to communicate efficiently and appropriately with minimal attention to the linguistic system - or also to the *process* (teaching/learning activities) as defined according to that goal and based on the idea that because authentic communication is by its very nature message-oriented and intention-motivated, so language teaching/learning activities should aim at getting learners to focus on the *what* of communication rather than the *how*; on developing pragmatic rather than semantic agility. It is the latter of these two interpretations, however, which appears to be the more favoured, a situation clearly reflected in materials design. In discussing authenticity, we have established the need for activities which promote the development of communication strategies and thus, by implication, fluency; the question now becomes *to what extent* an emphasis on fluency/PM promoted by such activities should feature in the learning process. The "subordination" of accuracy and SM suggests that PM/fluency-focused activities ought to predominate, the implication being that through such activities, what Brumfit (1984, p. 51) terms the learner's "mental set" will adjust itself accordingly and for all intents and purposes ultimately bypass the "virtual meaning" represented in the grammar.

If through these two principles advocates of CLT are indeed suggesting that during learning a *greater* proportion of time be devoted to the kinds of activities that promote a conscious involvement with PM rather than SM, then it seems unlikely that they qualify as *necessary* conditions for the achievement of communicative competence, for structurally-based teaching methods where the focus is primarily - and often solely - on SM have undeniably produced communicatively competent learners. As we have seen, both functional and structural approaches to language teaching do share the common goal of

communicative competence; where the two approaches differ is in the strategies they subscribe to in order to achieve that goal. Whilst it is reasonable to assume that strategy development activities are a necessary feature of the learning process, students of structuralist methods gain opportunities to engage in these incidentally via contact with the target language outside the classroom during and/or after their programme of study, whereas those of communicative language teaching do so as an integral and indispensable part of the language learning programme itself. The philosophy underlying the latter approach is one of immediate communicative returns from teaching methods rather than the longer-term structuralist investment strategy founded on the implicit belief - now referred to as the interface position - that what Krashen (1980, 1982) has termed *learnt knowledge* (formal knowledge) will, in time and with adequate practice, turn into *acquired knowledge* (the ability to apply that knowledge under real time constraints). Either way, if learners are to make the transition from a SM-oriented to an PM-oriented mode of operation, where fluency and automaticity are the name of the game, it is again activities which promote the development of strategic competence that must be seen as crucial to the learning process. Generally speaking, structural teaching methods have failed to adequately recognise the need for this component and therefore, while providing students with a particularly strong formal linguistic foundation (virtual meaning or *communicative potential*), the recipients of such methods who have not themselves pursued opportunities through which to evolve and hone communication strategies enabling them to access and apply their knowledge and perform their competence in different contexts of use independently of their learning programmes, have failed to become communicatively competent - a fact largely responsible for the wane of structuralism, as we have seen.

While there exists an unquestionable need for PM-focused communication during the process of foreign language learning - preferably within the formal learning setting where situations for such communication may be created and therefore exposure to it guaranteed - there is no compelling reason for accepting that it should *necessarily predominate* in that process. Indeed it might be equally valid to argue (re. 6.2.1) that the kind of automaticity of systemic manipulation developed through a heavily SM-biased programme of study could be potentially more valuable, with PM-oriented activities constituting the icing on the

cake, i.e. a necessary but relatively minor, more peripheral element in the struggle toward communicative competence. This argument is borne out by the multitude of cases where structurally taught students have, with remarkably little exposure to authentic communication, achieved high levels of communicative competence and, by the same token, those of communicative teaching methods who fail to do so and who apparently fossilise, frequently obstructed by 'short-cut' communicative strategies and unable and/or disinclined to adequately develop their control of linguistic forms (see Lightbown & Spada 1990 and Wesche 1992 on the Canadian Immersion Programme, as examples of the latter). The transition by many from what Howatt (1984, p. 279) has termed the *strong version* of the communicative approach - practically manifested in Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach (1983) and which rejects all explicit formal instruction - to the *weak version* "which has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years" and stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes while maintaining a legitimate role for form-focused classroom activity, is some evidence for the existence of what many feel is a growing sympathy toward this position. It might be noted that the very fact Howatt needs to make this distinction also constitutes further evidence of a lack of clarity as to precisely what the communicative approach stands for.

(iii) *The tolerance of error*: Given that a de-emphasis on error promotes fluency and helps establish conditions in which learners feel more able to focus on PM as opposed to SM, it is logical that it should feature as a principle of the communicative approach. However, as a subsidiary of the 'fluency/meaning' principles, its status as a necessary condition is subject to the same provisos; i.e. it is necessary *only in so far as* PM-focused activity is itself desirable; that is to say some but not all of the time. The basis on which the tolerance of error encourages fluency is both mechanical and affective in nature. It is mechanical in that the persistent correction of error must inevitably interfere with the flow of communication and redirect the learner's attention to SM, while in affective terms it threatens to sap learner confidence and therefore decrease the likelihood that students will disregard the reassurance of a structural focus in favour of a communicative one with its inherent risks. In other words it could impede the transition by learners from a focus on SM to one on PM.

It is the mechanical aspect, however, which is perhaps the more critical in that, unlike the affect, it is not subject to individual variability

and is bound to disrupt fluency regardless of the psychological make-up of the interlocutor.

(iv) *Comprehensible pronunciation is sought*: As with the tolerance of error principle, the desire merely for comprehensible - not NS-like - pronunciation further supports the push towards fluency and PM and away from accuracy and SM. If one accepts - and in light of the evidence it seems reasonable to do so - that few learners of a foreign language beyond a certain age ever attain NS-like phonological competence in the target language (itself a problematic concept raising the question of whose competence becomes the standard and related to the issue of what constitutes 'authentic language'), then given that communicative competence is the goal of teaching/learning and that this requires the adoption of strategy development activities and a fluency/PM-meaning focus, it follows that demanding perfect pronunciation is counter-productive and that therefore comprehensible pronunciation only is a necessary condition of the learning process via which that goal is to be achieved.

What is of interest is that whereas virtually all of the principles (i.e. guides to the process) of CLT are informed by descriptions of the goal (product) of learning, this is not so with pronunciation, a fact which perhaps bears witness to its recognised elusiveness. If NS-like phonological competence is unattainable for the great majority of learners, then there is no point in demanding it of them in the classroom. Also reflected in this principle is an awareness of humanistic or affective factors in learning and the psychologically damaging effects (low self-esteem, identity crises etc.) demands for NS-like pronunciation may have on learners. NS-like pronunciation being, as it almost invariably is, pie in the sky, such effects would be commonplace to say the least.

It is notable that in supporting the tolerance of error and comprehensible pronunciation principles as necessary given the learner's goal of communicative competence, a paradox arises from the broader issue here, namely that 'deviant' forms are in some sense acceptable within that framework. The problem lies in the nature of communication and the fact that by and large it is characterised by a good deal of built-in redundancy simply because ideal conditions of communication where noise, bad phrasing etc. do not feature, are rare. Redundancy thus becomes a compensatory factor present in most communication to combat obstacles

to the transmission of message. Now, if one allows for a divergence from the norm, as the 'comprehensible pronunciation' and 'tolerance of error' principles suggest one ought for those reasons specified above, then redundancy becomes reduced and what *is* used of the language needs, therefore, to be particularly effective or precise and overcome potential transmission problems. Among other things this presupposes a proficiency in the language that the learner may well not yet possess. Included here would be the ability, for example, to distil the crucial or most pertinent part(s) of the message and condense them appropriately.

This observation further illustrates the futility of attempting to maintain a principle of authenticity that is consistent with other tenets considered fundamental to the communicative approach. That is, how does one reconcile the redundancy typically present in authentic communication with a permissive attitude toward structural and phonological deviance?

(v) *Language should be viewed as a means to an end, not an end in itself*: Again very much tied in with the 'fluency over accuracy/meaning over form' principles, this principle likewise implicitly stresses the idea that the ends of learning ought to determine the means, and in this respect it is a necessary condition for the achievement of those ends in the same way as is tolerance of error; that is when a pragmatic meaning focus is the object of classroom activities. Similarly also, it shows an awareness of the affective dimension to language learning, for in emphasising language as a means to an end it is likely to enhance motivation by showing learners the practical applications of what they are doing. Again though, due to individual variability in the degree to which affective factors aid or hinder learning, such considerations would, *by themselves*, seem unable to justify classifying those principles in which they feature as necessary conditions for the development of communicative competence.

(vi) *Students work with language at the discourse level*: A good deal of meaning conveyed and understood in communication is encoded as much in what is *not* explicitly stated as in what is. Our ability to negotiate conversations, read passages, newspaper and magazine articles, novels etc. is largely dependent upon our understanding of the immediate physical and linguistic context in which communication is taking place and our knowledge of the conventions of discourse, as well as the kinds of inferences and presuppositions we make based on our knowledge of the

world and the complex network of schemata we have established relating to countless topical and situational domains with which we have had contact. Without an understanding of such things, communication will quickly break down and become meaningless and incoherent for the most part (see Brown and Yule 1983). Although different language communities may to some extent share the way in which they organise and manipulate discourse for meaning, there is nevertheless clearly ample room for a good deal of divergence among different groups (even, to some degree, within the same macro-culture), and as discourse structure can provide an important link between linguistic form and intended meaning (and thereby glimpses into the L2 culture), it is necessary for language to be dealt with at that level. Not only will this provide learners with the requisite insights into the ways in which discourse structures *control* meaning - thus improving their efficiency and proficiency - it will also promote fluency. Indeed, without working at the level of discourse, it is difficult to imagine how fluency and PM negotiation can be accounted for in learning and thus given the necessary rein to develop. To engage in pragmatic meaning almost by definition involves engaging with the language in its full context both physical and linguistic. The way in which a particular piece of spoken or written text is understood and thus reacted to is in large part determined by its location in the broader linguistic context, and the way in which different sections of text are juxtaposed may signal different meanings for different speech communities. To understand and respond effectively and appropriately to these relationships is to engage in the negotiation of pragmatic meaning and forms part of what it means to become fluent in a language. Indeed, fluency is neither useful nor wholly meaningful without reference to the ability to deal with discoursal idiosyncrasies. As such we see further evidence of the interconnectedness of the principles of CLT.

(vii) *Opportunities should exist for interaction*: We have seen that procedures encouraging the development of communication strategies constitute a necessary condition that needs to be satisfied if communicative competence is to come about. Interaction, whether between interlocutors or text and reader, is crucial to providing the kind of environment where these strategies can develop, and as such it must also be regarded as a necessary condition.

(viii) *Linguistic variation should be encouraged*: Clearly, linguistic variation is a facet of native speaker behaviour. It is a resource that can be drawn upon in response to performance constraints such as temporary inability to retrieve a lexical item or expression, but, equally, to adjust the register of our speech in response to contexts of use; thus while we may greet *a friend*, quite acceptably, with "Hey, how's it going?", we would be more likely to address a student's parents with "Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Flashman. How are you?". Likewise, having access to a variety of expressions enables one to gauge the formality or otherwise of contexts of communication if one is able to associate those expressions with particular levels of formality. Moreover, such knowledge in turn helps ensure that intended speech acts (often buried in formal registers through the use of various rhetorical devices) are recognised or correctly interpreted.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that there is going to be a more frequent need for learners to master and call upon alternative forms of expression in the target language; a need arising not so much from an awareness of registerial norms and the demands contextual constraints place upon language use (of which many learners will have a restricted understanding), but from the need to compensate for accessing problems, memory limitations, or the recognition of their inability to complete the sentence/expression they have embarked upon. In this respect linguistic variation would seem to constitute a necessary focus of teaching/learning for it represents a part of the learner's developing sociocultural competence and, more importantly, his strategic competence. Both of these are, in turn, crucial elements of communicative competence.

(ix) *The culture as well as the language needs to be taught*: The communicative approach to language teaching was in large part a response to what was a lack of consideration, at both the practical and the theoretical levels, for the concept of *context of communication* and the importance of those socio-cultural factors that are corollaries of this and which play a significant role in controlling the accurate encoding and interpretation of meaning. As Hymes took pains to point out, being communicatively competent requires not only the knowledge and ability to be grammatical, but also *appropriate* in what we say. If language learners are to acquire an adequate knowledge of what is appropriate in language use, it needs to be taught them, for while exposure to authentic language can, via the process of deduction, create some understanding of the relationship between form and context of use, that relationship may not always be deducible through

observation alone, especially in those languages where the form-function relationship may in certain situations (such as the 'Japanese neighbour complaining' scenario cited earlier) be particularly oblique compared with the learner's own language.

Finally, if, as I have suggested, language needs to be taught at the discourse level, then this too makes a case for the need to teach culture, since discourse structure is culture bound. Thus the thinking underlying Kaplan's 1966 study of contrastive rhetoric in which he illustrates what he sees as dominant patterns of formal written discourse in major language groups, might be equally legitimately applied to the spoken language. One cannot talk about discourse without also talking about culture: Discourse has to do with the appropriate use of language in context and a consideration of the ways in which that context constrains - and thus aids - one's understanding of what is said while also setting parameters upon the contribution one can make to the discourse. It is in large part the community that defines the context, and it follows, therefore, that in order to use the language appropriately one needs to be contracted into the cultural norms of that community. Communication necessarily involves drawing upon the communal values which define the culture in which that communication takes place.

(x) *Sequencing should be determined by what is meaningful and relevant/of interest to the students*: Sequencing according to what is relevant to the learner again shows the humanistic bent of CLT and its concern with affective considerations in learning, for it is true to say that an interlocutor is more motivated and thus more likely to engage more fully in communication that is meaningful and relevant to him. In common with the *language as a means to an end* principle, it must be said that as a principle pertaining to the affect and thus prone to variability in its relevance according to different individuals' psychological profiles, the sequencing principle would appear questionable in terms of being necessary to the process of achieving communicative competence.

It is noteworthy that the idea of sequencing according to learners' interests (and this will often - though not necessarily always - mean materials/activities relating to the ultimate use(s) to which they anticipate putting the language) shows a disregard of second language acquisition research and the notion that there is an invariant order of acquisition; a significant point relating to the product-informs-process philosophy underlying CLT and discussed at length in Chapter 5.

(xi) *All exchanges and activities should have a purpose*: Those comments of the previous section equally apply to the idea of purposeful communication.

(xii) *Classrooms should be learner-centred*: If learners are to have opportunities to engage in strategy development activities as we have suggested they ought if they are to become communicatively competent, then it follows that classroom activities must to some degree be learner-centred - that is, learner initiated; just *how* learner-centred is less clear however. While there is good reason to believe that ideally classrooms should feature both teacher and learner-centred activities, what their relative proportions ought to be is open to question and likely requires a consideration of learner goals, personality and proficiency level, as well as of any psycholinguistic evidence revealed in SLA research.

(xiii) *Learner autonomy*: The notion of learner autonomy and the idea that students ought to take responsibility for their own learning has basis in both psychology and education theory in general. Psychologically it pertains to the affect in that through exercising autonomy students make the target language their own, learn via their own ways and means, are forced to be active, creative and initiating participants in the learning process, and thus able to take credit for and derive satisfaction from their achievements. The result is learners who - so the argument goes - experience higher levels of motivation. In terms of this affective basis, to consider the principle of learner autonomy as a necessary condition for the development of communicative competence is, on the face of it, problematical for reasons stated above concerning individual variability and the consequent difficulty of making absolute judgements. It is, however, rendered necessary according to a principle of education theory which states that any kind of learning requires the learner to go beyond the input data (i.e. that information he receives during learning) and induce generalities from it which he can then apply in responding to different and original sets of particular circumstances. In other words, there needs to be a progression from particulars to generalities and back to particulars again. If the language learner is to do this and take independent action not warranted by the data he is initially exposed to, then there needs to be a degree of autonomy in learning, for learning is definable in terms of autonomy, and the classroom environment needs to reflect this. One of the most serious criticisms that may be levelled against drill-dominated structuralist teaching methods is that they deprived learners of such

autonomy and thus promoted memorisation at the expense of learning. The two facets of education are both necessary yet distinct.

Summary From this analysis, it would appear to be the case that certain principles commonly cited as fundamental to the communicative approach are a logical consequence of communicative competence theory and can thus be considered well-founded. Others, on the other hand, bear no obvious relation to the theory and tend to suggest the influence of more intuitive notions about how best to instil communicative language ability in learners. As such their standing as sound guides to teaching practice must be considered questionable. There is, however, a certain category of principles that warrant closer inspection, for they raise an issue which will resurface in later chapters and prove to be of some considerable significance; these I shall refer to here as the *affective principles of CLT*.

3.3.1.1 Affective Principles: Individual Variability Vs. Collectivity

Affective principles of CLT can be grouped into two kinds. The first group consists of the 'sequencing' and 'purposeful activities' principles (i.e. principles x and xi) which seek to justify their existence *solely* on the basis of affective considerations and their ability to instil a positive attitude on the part of the learner. The second group includes the 'tolerance of error', 'comprehensible pronunciation', 'language as a means to an end' and 'learner autonomy' principles (i.e. principles iii, iv, v and xiii). These likewise relate to the affect but are not dependent upon that relationship to justify their existence, for they have alternative - and, I have argued, sound - bases for their status as necessary principles of the approach.

With particular regard to the first group of principles, it has been argued (above) that due to inevitable individual differences in the psychological make-up of learners, regarding these principles as necessary to the achievement of communicative competence is problematical, for what to one person might be disruptive, unengaging or an important psychological obstacle, to another might be insignificant, or even a positive learning experience.

However, there is an argument (articulated in greater depth in chapter 5) which allows these affective principles to be 'reinstated' as legitimate facets of CLT, *not* so much on the basis that they follow logically from communicative competence theory, but because they encapsulate a general principle of learning - much as the notion of learner autonomy

acquired legitimacy through allowing for the operation of the 'particulars»generalities»particulars' learning principle cited above. The argument I refer to is based on the idea that for education to proceed at all, and with a reasonable degree of efficiency, principles of learning need to assume a collectivity of 'the learner'; were they not to do so, the enterprise would never get off the ground. One such principle states that for learning to take place, the learner has to be engaged with the object of his learning. In other words, he has to somehow be motivated or interested by it, and it is the teacher's job to determine how best to achieve this given the particular context in which he finds himself operating. Each of the affective principles stated above uphold this learning principle in some way of form, but they represent an implicit acknowledgement of it; the principle itself is never overtly stated as a fundamental tenet of CLT.

In sum, then, we might say that although these particular affective principles can be viewed as unnecessary on the grounds of *individual variability*, they *can* be considered necessary according to *general principles of education and learning*.

3.3.2 From Principles to Practices

Having shed some light on the logical status of communicative principles vis à vis the ethos and goals of the approach, we should now look at the logical constraints they in turn place upon the kinds of classroom techniques teachers may rationally apply and whether those techniques typically associated with CLT are in fact analyticals or contingencies of the approach's principles.

Because the potential exists for so much variation and individual creativity in the kinds of activities language teachers can incorporate into teaching/learning, it is difficult to speak of "necessary" activities in anything other than very broad terms. Indeed, this might be at least partial justification for Richards and Rodgers' claims of diversity in the way CLT is interpreted; i.e. it is perhaps at the level of *pedagogical application* that the approach inevitably becomes particularly difficult to define in specific terms. What does seem clear, as I hope to illustrate below, is that whatever pedagogical rendition teachers wish to give of CLT principles, what goes on in the classroom ought (necessarily) to include activities of the two kinds Littlewood identifies and which present learners with opportunities to develop a functional competence in the target language. This would

imply being able to cope with the rate and linguistic complexity of authentic communication - and everything that entails - as well as cultivating an awareness of the significance of different contexts in the expression and interpretation of meaning, and the ability to adapt to these accordingly.

Given the range of possible activities that may be used to accomplish these ends, the notion of "validity" perhaps provides a better yardstick via which to evaluate individual communicative activities. On this basis, whilst the generic types (i.e. *functional communication* and *social interaction* activities) Littlewood proposes are, I suggest, necessary in terms of developing a functional competence in the L2, those specific activities designed to realise them (listed above) are themselves *unnecessary* in that in most cases they may be substituted for alternatives each of which may be equally legitimate as members of either one of the categories, and thus equally *valid* in serving to promote that competence.

So what is it that the promotion of these abilities actually involves in performance terms? What is it that the members of Littlewood's two activity types have in common that binds them together, and how do those links constitute necessary facets of classroom behaviour in light of the principles of communicative language teaching?

Functional communication activities (FCAs) are clearly bound together by the demands they each place on learners to interact with one another and negotiate meaning in order to bridge an information gap and complete a task. If, based on the reasoning outlined above, one accepts the need for activities which promote strategic competence in learners and the consequent need for a degree of autonomy and interaction in the classroom, then clearly one must also recognise the need for FCAs at some stage in the learning process. For advocates of CLT who take a broader stance and regard an "authentic" environment (which would naturally involve learners in strategy development) as necessary to effective learning and the acquisition of communicative competence - a position I have suggested is questionable (p. 25) - then again FCAs would appear to be necessary in that they provide the kind of spontaneity, uncertainty and negotiation of meaning characteristic of genuine communication. Moreover, although the 4 kinds of FCAs are set up to elicit different types of interaction based on variable access to knowledge and the degree of reasoning demanded of the participants, each is authentic in that it represents a possible real-life scenario, and together they would appear to

cover the whole range of task-oriented, non open-ended communication possibilities.

If, as most communicativists would have us believe, fluency and meaning are to take precedence over accuracy and form (principles 2 and 3) and language is to be viewed as a means to an end (principle 3c), then it seems reasonable to suppose that goal-oriented, purposeful interactive activities are needed in order to focus learners' attention on the *what* of communication and the pragmatic reality of the target language. For similar reasons, it has to be said that even when these principles are viewed as contingencies and the role of (for example) fluency-based activities in foreign language learning is relegated to a more limited one, interactive activities such as we are talking about remain a necessity nonetheless if learners are to be weaned off a preoccupation with semantic meaning, develop strategies for responding to natural speech in real time, and focus predominantly on pragmatic meaning.

Social interaction activities (SIAs) serve to increase in the learner an awareness of the influence of context on language use and the associations that exist between the *what* and the *where* of communication - between code and context - to create pragmatic meaning. Regardless of the status of the authenticity principle as necessary or contingent, SIAs are necessary in that they provide essential opportunities for practising the kind of open-ended, often less clearly motivated, yet nonetheless tightly rule-governed communication perhaps most prevalent in our everyday conversational exchanges. An appreciation of the dynamics and negotiation involved in such communication is requisite to achieving pragmatic meaning and thus communicative competence.

Once language takes account of social contextual factors, it simultaneously demands an understanding of conventional discourse 'patterns', for social context is heavily reflected in the way discourse is structured, and in this sense predetermines it. Learning this relationship is developing an understanding of the rules of appropriacy in language use and allows for the realisation of what Halliday refers to as "meaning potential" (1978, pp. 19 & 21).

Once we have established the nature of the social context within which we are engaged, we almost instinctively follow often quite narrowly defined discourse paths; the general conversational framework already exists and merely requires the user to slot in a series of interchangeable, semantically similar words/phrases from what is a limited selection. This

idea would seem to exemplify what Firth is alluding to when he states that the specification of contextual features framing a communicative event "is parallel with the grammatical rules, and is based on the repetitive routines of initiated persons in the society under description" (1950, p. 182).

This process of substituting elements of general conversational frameworks is very much reflected in notional-functional textbooks which frequently provide students with skeletal representations of what are judged to be commonly occurring exchanges, along with very predictable cues to help them successfully perform role-play activities. Ironically, such exercises smack all too strongly of the kind of habit formation-based dialogues and drills associated with audiolingualism and spurned by the communicative movement. While they may provide some indication of the boundaries of acceptability governing discourse, they fail to furnish learners with opportunities to actively discover the meaning negotiation process characteristic of natural, spontaneous interaction, and via which those boundaries become established and thus truly meaningful to the language user. It is only through discovering this process that the learner becomes empowered to maximally exercise what Widdowson (1983) calls his "communicative capacity",[2] and legitimately negotiate his way through situations of language use, while simultaneously developing a personal idiolect and the kind of creativity associated with natural language use and the principles of learner-centredness and learner autonomy.

If students are to work with language at the discourse level and adequately understand the way in which what is spoken, written or 'heard' is governed by the context of communication, and to what degree, and if they are to appreciate the boundaries within which they may forge their own personal style of self-expression to truly make the language their own, then social interaction activities through which they can form and test their hypotheses about the way the target language operates are necessary, and no amount of theoretical or 'textbook' learning removed from personal involvement in the communicative experience can provide an adequate substitute.

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2 Widdowson defines "communicative capacity" as ". . . the ability to create meanings by exploiting the potential inherent in the language for continual modification in response to change". He goes on, "The creativity associated with capacity refers to the ability to produce and understand *utterances* by using the resources of the grammar in association with features of context to make meaning, which is a function of the relationship between the two" (1983, p. 8).

3.4 The Need for a Re-analysis of the Approach, and a Recipe for Clarification and Improvement

Communicative language teaching is often perceived as a tightly woven package reference to which all too frequently assumes a shared set of co-ordinates guiding both speaker and listener, writer and reader, to a common interpretation of the approach. The sense of confusion, ambiguity and immaturity that issues such as those outlined above suggest surrounds CLT, casts considerable doubt on such assumptions and is, I propose, indicative of a lack of rigorous examination and understanding of the *Impetus-Principles-Application* hierarchy, both in terms of the constitution of each of the three elements with regard to the approach, as well as the precise nature of those relations binding them together. For this, both theorists and pedagogues must share responsibility.

The theorists, despite having provided the necessary rationale for functionalism in language teaching/learning and established and defined communicative competence as its objective, have failed to address with similar integrity its implications for the lower two levels of the hierarchy. That is, by inadequately considering and detailing the dependency relations holding between the theoretical impetus, principles and application of the approach, applied linguists have allowed room for ambiguity and thus variability in its interpretation. Such variability Richards and Rodgers take to be justification for categorising CLT as an "approach" rather than a "method", the suggestion being that teaching proposals ought to be labelled one or the other according to where the greater specificity and least room for diversity of interpretation exists. However, given the kind of inconsistency and muddle such ambiguity and variability appears to have spawned, Richards and Rodgers' readiness to categorise CLT according to this distinction must be regarded as dubious and ill-conceived, for it wrongly presupposes the existence of a core of well-defined concepts, hence endowing CLT with a false legitimacy belying its actual more questionable status.

Hutchinson and Waters make further allusion to the vagaries of CLT where, in their discussion of the term 'communicative', they state:

> This has become such an emotive word, that, rather like 'democracy' or 'freedom', it is claimed by everyone and is capable of innumerable interpretations, many of which are flatly contradictory. It has come, in effect, to mean simply a good, modern

> approach to language teaching, rather than indicating what that approach might consist of.
>
> (Hutchinson and Waters 1987, p. 23).

Such sentiments are all too widespread as the following two more recent quotations from Holliday and Johnson help make plain:

> It is certainly true that the communicative approach has been so much interpreted, popularised and misunderstood as to have lost currency in recent years.
>
> (Holliday 1994, p. 165)

> The 'communicative approach' to language teaching has enjoyed great popularity in recent years, and as a consequence the word 'communicative' has unfortunately suffered the fate of words like 'democracy' and 'freedom' - through overuse they have come to mean whatever the user wants them to mean, usually referring to something generally considered (in some vague way) to be 'a good thing'.
>
> (Johnson 1996, p. 173)

If the kind of diffusion and fragmentation these writers identify is to be avoided, it is first and foremost the job of theorists to fully articulate, inter-relate and control the language teaching concepts they so readily employ in their discussions and presentations of communicative language teaching.

For their part, practitioners and materials designers have generally failed to adequately inform themselves about and understand the pedagogical significance of theoretical developments in the field; in particular, attempts to establish comprehensive models of communicative competence. In other words, the gap between theory and practice has remained for the most part unbridged with many language teachers feeling that the theorist is out of touch with the reality of the classroom and the needs of the student, and equally the theorist claiming - quite correctly - that methods and materials uninformed by theory lack credence. All too often the activities of publishers and language teachers alike who claim to be promoting CLT, suggest that at the level of theory, they see no further than the broad goal of communicative competence which they interpret over-simplistically as "getting students communicating". They then proceed to translate that goal into a series of now clichéd 'communicative activities' (information gap, role-plays etc.) under the assumption - frequently shared by theorists - that the process of

learning ought to reflect the product, yet while remaining largely ignorant or neglectful of what precisely it is that being *and becoming* communicatively competent involves and thus of the true significance of the principles mediating between the approach's theoretical impetus and its classroom application. This has in the past led to an unwarranted - and for many, counter-intuitive - extremism, broadly anti-structuralist in tone and typified most poignantly in the wholesale rejection of explicit grammar instruction (the role of which is now, happily, the object of a "post-communicative" rethink) and knowledge-oriented learning activities in general. Arguably, Krashen's Monitor Model (1977a, 1977b) with its acquisition-learning distinction - the only significant attempt to give psycholinguistic validity to CLT and now largely discredited (e.g. Gregg 1984, McLaughlin, 1987) - is partly responsible for this attitude, emphasising as it does the need *solely* for exposure to the L2 in the form of comprehensible input, and minimalising the effects of any formal instruction.

While few would wish to seriously question the importance of the communicative movement in language teaching, its underlying rationale and broad objectives, or its continued future impact on the field, the issues that have been highlighted do indicate a very real need to review the approach at the grass roots level both for purposes of remedying as far as possible the confusion that presently exists, and, in doing so, informing alternative interpretations of the approach consistent with its theoretical ethos while also paving the way for teachers and course designers to be more flexible within the communicative paradigm in response to local contexts of use. I shall ultimately argue that the key to any such remedy and concomitant change of perspective lies in the notion of authenticity, for it is authenticity which underlies most - if not all - of the confusions raised thus far.

It seems reasonable to suppose that had developments centring on the idea of language as use (and encapsulated in communicative competence theory) not taken place, then "authenticity" in language teaching would not have risen to its current pre-eminence. It is appropriate, therefore, that as a preface to any meaningful discussion of authenticity and its place in CLT, some consideration should be given to the concept of communicative competence, its motivation, and what it sought to capture that was not evident in preceding models of language. Most importantly to the present discussion, what is the nature of those

frameworks of communicative competence that have been proposed and how adequate are they (i) as valid descriptions of what is involved in authentic communication, and (ii) as useful models providing a better understanding of how teachers can (most effectively) teach towards communicative competence?

It is the object of Chapters 3 and 4 to inquire into these questions through a critical appraisal of the notion of communicative competence, a term which, Canale (1983, p. 2) notes disapprovingly, has acquired the unfortunate status of a "buzzword" in applied linguistics - sentiments echoing an earlier warning by Widdowson that "the term 'communicative competence' is now very much in fashion and for this reason alone it is well to be wary of it" (1978, p. 163).

Chapter 4

The Emergence and Development of Communicative Competence Theory

4.1 Introduction

"Communicative competence" has without doubt become part of the basic vocabulary of linguistics and applied linguistics in recent years. Although Davies (1989, p. 157) suggests its first published use is that of Campbell and Wales (1970), for many the term has come to be principally associated with Dell Hymes, the American anthropologist and linguist responsible for popularising it and to a great extent endowing it with the influence it currently wields in the language teaching profession.

Those ideas implicit in the concept of communicative competence, however, had origins preceding Hymes's definitive formulation and emanating from multifarious disciplines including linguistics, anthropology, psychology and philosophy; origins which ultimately were to provide CLT with a rich, if eclectic, theoretical base. Hymes's very significant contribution as far as linguistics is concerned lay in providing a 'melting pot' - turning on the key notion of "acceptability" - in which those ideas could come together and be unified or fused in a way that would ultimately be seen as heralding a new paradigm, a new direction in language teaching.

That Hymes was able to make this contribution at all and give vent to the various conceptually related ideas circulating within those different disciplines is a reflection of the intellectual, social, political and educational climate of the time. Conditions were fertile for his ideas to take root and ultimately permeate the field of language teaching at all levels.

It was the ideas of Chomsky, however, that were to be the immediate catalyst in a reaction spearheaded by the concept of communicative competence and set to change perceptions of the nature of language and the goals and methods of language instruction in accordance with those principles that were to become realised in the communicative approach.

4.2 The Theoretical Motivation for a Theory of Communicative Competence

4.2.1 Chomsky's *Competence-Performance* Distinction

As a rationalist concerned with the universal, cognitive mechanisms responsible for language behaviour, Chomsky deliberately dissociated himself from the socio-cultural/situational particularities intrinsic to the issue of language use in context, choosing instead to interpret linguistic competence more narrowly within the framework of an ideal speaker-listener...

> in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitation, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance.
>
> (Chomsky 1965, p. 3)

By distilling language from the conditions of its use and so idealising it, Chomsky was able to disregard the problems associated with accounting for the relationships between form and function in context; considerations which he saw as irrelevant and undesirable given the precision necessarily involved in a formal and universal account of the rules which govern creativity in language; rules which, he claimed, "have the formal properties that they do have by virtue of the structure of the human mind" (Lyons 1981, p. 231). His consequent decision to restrict his enquiry to a notion of *competence* synonymous with the potential to be grammatical, while assigning to *performance* all forms of variation and deviation from a standard, was the cue that provoked Hymes's reverberant response.

4.2.2 Hymes's Response to Chomsky: The Notion of "Acceptability" and the Move from "Competence" to "Communicative Competence"

Hymes saw the need for a description of language to "*transcend* the notions of perfect competence, homogeneous speech community, and independence of sociocultural features" (1972, p. 274; italics added). As such his theory of *communicative competence* was intended not as a

rejection of Chomsky's notion of competence but rather as an extension or development of it according to which the kinds of performance factors surrounding any speech event were seen as an integral part of a theory of communication. Idealising *a* language and describing it (as Chomsky had done) solely according to its grammatical characteristics as manifested by a *homogeneous* population of its users was, Hymes suggested, naïve on a number of counts:

Firstly, within and across those cultures that share a common language there exists a good deal of variability in the nature and perception of linguistic ability. As such, to refer to a *standard* variety against which linguistic 'competence' might be judged is misleading, particularly as socio-cultural and socio-economic factors would appear in part to dictate, or demarcate, what is or is not the same language, and not merely linguistic features. To equate a speech community with the language of its members "rules out the heterogeneity of a speech community, diversity of role among speakers, and stylistic or social meaning" (Berns 1990, p. 31).

This feeds into a second issue, namely that with the exception of certain élite or professional groups, there is no such thing as a homogeneous speech community at a macro-level as Chomsky suggests. Within any single language community there exist various socio-economic groups each sharing different grammatical, phonological, lexical and registerial norms, yet they may understand each other perfectly well while also recognising a *range* of linguistic styles for use in different contexts within a set of shared norms.

There is, moreover, the notion of "differential competence", where we may feel able to participate more fluently in certain discourse domains than others. A community, Hymes suggests, may find Kurdish "the medium in which most things can be expressed, but Arabic the better medium for religious truth" (Hymes 1972, p. 275). Likewise, "users of Berber may find Arabic superior to Berber for all purposes except intimate domestic conversation"(ibid., p. 275). It seems likely that this phenomenon is similar to that which at the interlinguistic level causes bilingual speakers to code switch either within or across sentences or discourse domains.

The notion of grammaticality is also unaccounted for in Chomsky's scheme in the sense that what appears to the grammarian as degenerate language may, in Hymes's words, be "the artful accomplishment of a social act", or "the patterned spontaneous evidence of problem-solving and

conceptual thought" (ibid., p. 272). Furthermore, some occasions, he states, "call for being appropriately ungrammatical" (ibid., p. 277).

It was sociolinguistic issues such as these that underlay Hymes's commonly cited statement that "There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless". Both competencies, he argued are "part of the same developmental matrix", and as such linguistic theory needs to:

> ...account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner".
>
> (Hymes 1972, p. 277)

It was this need to understand the non-grammatical aspect of the "developmental matrix" which motivated that area of enquiry known as the "ethnography of communication"; the study of those socio-cultural realities which govern the way in which we mean and are appropriate with language. This was an area that had various precedents - most notably in the work of Malinowski, The Prague School, Firth, and Austin and Searle - which reflected a common concern (if expressed in somewhat different terms respectively) that linguists "include statements about the way in which language is used in social interaction, and how it varies in accordance with its social function" (Allen 1975, p. 39). Thus Malinowski in his ethnographic study of the Trobriand Islanders was conscious of the significance of what he termed the *context of situation* in language use, noting that "the situation in which words are uttered can never be passed over as irrelevant to the linguistic expression". The Prague school was likewise concerned with the relationship between the formal linguistic system and what Vachek referred to as "extra-lingual reality", or situational characteristics (1966, p. 7). Firth, meanwhile, proposed a distinction - corresponding closely to the semantic-pragmatic meaning dichotomy discussed in chapter 3 - between *formal meaning* (the relations between structural items in a sentence) and *situational meaning* (the product of the interaction between structural items and all other non-verbal contextual elements of the communicative situation. Halliday later referred to the process of getting to grips with and manipulating this form-context relationship in order to perform social acts or functions as "learning how to mean".

Austin's (1962) contribution to the 'language and context' debate (elaborated upon by Searle, 1969) came from within the discipline of philosophy in the form of Speech Act theory, to which Hymes makes reference in his celebrated and influential article of 1972. Speech act theory has been described as...

> ...concerned with the functional units of speech (i.e. speech acts) and the ways in which they derive their meaning not from grammatical form but from the rules of interpretation that prevail in a given speech community.
>
> (Savignon 1983, p. 14; my parentheses)

This "concern" is similarly echoed in Allen and Widdowson's observation that:

> Before the learner of a language can be regarded as proficient, he must know not only the basic structural principles of the language (the code) but also how to use sentences in *performing acts of communication*, and how to combine them to create coherent passages of discourse (*use of code*).
>
> (Allen and Widdowson 1975, p. 89; my italics)

The functions or "acts" performed by an utterance may be numerous and not always apparent in the surface structure of what is said. For example, "It's cold in here" may function as an assertion about the temperature inside a room, a warning not to bring the baby in, or as a request to turn on the heater (Bachman 1990, p. 90). Each of these represents a different speech act. Moreover, numerous different forms may be used to perform the same one act; Fraser and Nolan, for example, (1981) identify 18 distinct strategies as possible ways of making the same request.

Searle (1969) distinguishes 3 types of speech act: utterance acts (simply saying something), propositional acts (referring to or expressing predication about something) and illocutionary acts (the function(s) performed in saying something). Accordingly, an utterance's meaning can be described in terms of its propositional content (reference and predication), its illocutionary *force* (the intended illocutionary act), or its perlocutionary effect (its effect on the hearer).

The success or otherwise in conveying or interpreting the correct (i.e. appropriate) illocutionary force of an utterance is dependent upon two factors:

(i) The degree of directness with which the speaker signals the illocutionary force he intends;

(ii) The contextual clues accompanying the utterance.

Clearly these two factors are related; the more indirect the speaker is, the more important becomes the context to the listener's interpretation of what is said. As Bachman points out, for the speaker...

> ...the choice from among several alternative utterances of differing degrees of directness will... be a function of both the speaker's illocutionary competence, and his sensitivity to the characteristics of the specific context, which is part of sociolinguistic competence.
>
> (Bachman 1990, p. 91)

The notion that appropriate communication (in Austin's parlance the establishment of "felicity conditions" in order to make an utterance "happy") depends upon an understanding of force - a function of the relationship between what is said and the situation of its utterance - clearly dovetailed with the contextual concerns of Malinowski, The Prague School, Firth, Hymes and Halliday. As such, it not only served to reinforce the idea that linguistic theory needed to take those concerns into account, but it also provided a useful conceptual tool through which to consider the implications of a view of language as use.[3]

Prompted by what he saw as Chomsky's "Garden of Eden" conception of competence, Hymes was able to harness and give new currency and structure to these sociolinguistically inclined strains of thought. So as to account for the "rules of use" that were a natural corollary of language in context and provide a more comprehensive account of language behaviour, Hymes modified Chomsky's limited notion of competence in two ways:

(i) He extended it beyond the merely grammatical to include three additional parameters of acceptability (detailed in section 4.5.1 below). In so doing, he formalised the concept of *communicative competence*, thereby giving it greater influence and helping ensure its place as a more enduring - even permanent - fixture in linguistics/applied linguistics. Chomsky's "competence" was thus superseded by a broader concept of communication.

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3 It is notable that, with Austin concerned as he was with what he called the "performative" aspect of language, the illocutionary acts such as promising and warning which he identifies to illustrate his theory, closely resemble those "functions" (proposed by Wilkins, 1972, 1976) that have come to be considered so much part and parcel of communicative language teaching.

(ii) He saw communicative competence as involving not only *knowledge* of the grammatical and sociolinguistic rules governing language use, but also the *ability* to access that knowledge given environmental and cognitive constraints of the kind Chomsky relegated to performance and consciously ignored, but which undeniably 'frame' all natural communication.

4.3 Bridging the Theoretical and Practical Origins of the Communicative Movement

The change of direction in linguistics which these various theoretical developments represented *coincided* with certain trends in and changing perceptions of classroom practices. That is, the relationship between those theoretical and practical developments that instigated the communicative movement in language teaching was not so much one of *chicken and egg* as of mutual reinforcement or affirmation. There was a convergence of conceptually related developments, both theoretical and practical, which together created the conditions necessary to bring about a "revolution" of the kind spoken of by Kuhn.

4.4 The Practical Basis for a Theory of Communicative Competence

4.4.1 Experiential Considerations

At the close of the 1960s there existed among language teachers a growing perception that classroom practices were inadequate and ripe for change. The principal motivation for such sentiments lay in the phenomenon of students frequently emerging from language courses with substantial structural knowledge of the target language, yet unable to communicate effectively in speech under the kinds of real-time constraints imposed by an authentic environment (re. section 2.3). Quoting Newmark (1966), Johnson speaks of the "structurally competent" student who has "developed the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences yet who is unable to perform a simple communicative task" (1981, p. 1).

Chomsky was an important factor in helping create the conditions necessary for change to occur in teaching habits, for in advocating an inherent creativity in language based upon universal mechanisms he not only undermined the structuralist view of language, but simultaneously the then current methodology of audiolingualism so closely bound up with it and based on Skinnerian behaviourist psychology and the antithetical ideas of stimulus-response, reinforcement and habit formation. Thus, while at the level of theory the traditions of structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology were seriously called into question and eventually replaced by the communicative paradigm, at the level of pedagogical practice audiolingualism was discredited, leaving a vacuum that would be filled by communicative language teaching, the practical realisation of that paradigm.

The importance of redressing what in effect had been a code-communication imbalance in pedagogy and equip learners with the pragmatic means for coping with the situational constraints of language use, was becoming increasingly evident as the more prominent role of English in the international community fuelled a need to be able to function in the language and participate usefully and directly in social, educational, commercial and political activity. It is likely that this realisation added a practical impetus to the theoretical rise of functionalism in linguistics; to the notion of language for communication and the ideas of Hymes and Halliday in particular that were so operative in propelling it to such prominence. In 1975, Allen observed:

> After several decades of preoccupation with purely formal studies, there are signs that linguists are beginning to turn their attention once more to the communicative properties of language and the functioning of language in social contexts. This development is of particular interest to language teachers, many of whom have long felt the need to give more attention in the dassroom to communicative function as well as, and in relation to, linguistic form.
>
> (Allen 1975, p. 39)

Thus, to the extent that political and commercial realities helped in some degree to shape theoretical developments, it bears repeating that the emergence of the communicative paradigm in language teaching was subject to what were termed in Chapter 1 the *external forces* of paradigm of change.

4.4.2 The Influence of English for Specific Purposes

In 1978, John Munby wrote:

> In recent years ESP has become a major developmental focus in the area of what may now be called communicative syllabus design and materials production.
>
> (Munby 1978, p. 1)

In the late sixties and early seventies involvement in ESP bred an increased awareness of the limitations of ideas about language teaching current at the time, for it obliged teachers to contemplate how language related to external circumstances and different discourse domains, i.e. how it expressed the concepts and communicative conventions of different speech communities. As such, the concepts of contextualization, the speech act, register etc. associated with "external language" and which were then becoming central to the theoretical debate, were already implicitly very much part and parcel of ESP, indeed inextricably bound up with it. The question that functionally oriented theorists such as Hymes and Halliday prompted, however, was "What *system* (if any) is being used to arrive at the specification of the English deemed appropriate for different purposes?" (Munby, ibid., p. 1); how does one model those factors that require consideration in designing a course of language learning that will provide the learner with the kind of target communicative competence he requires given the ultimate context in which he expects to use the language?

Now this question can reasonably be said to apply to any programme of English language learning for there is a sense in which ESP refers to *any* use of English, and the term *general English* (with which it is often contrasted) is meaningless. All communication involves dealing with a particular type of speech community with its own set of communicative conventions defined in terms of linguistic and sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy. The only difference between "ESP" and "general English" lies not in the fact that those conventions of communication are in principle necessarily any more rigid and clearly definable in the case of the ESP, but in the fact that the ultimate context of use is clearly established in the mind of the learner; he knows which context he will be operating in, unlike the learner of general English who, as we have seen, will need to have invested in learning strategies that will

enable him to adjust as effectively as possible to the communicative conventions of the community in which he finds himself functioning.

Given this perspective, the frameworks, or "systems" that follow address, in different ways and to varying degrees, the question of what factors need to be taken into account when constructing a syllabus designed to maximise a learner's communicative competence. In the case of "ESP", certain of these factors (or components) will be more precisely specifiable; nevertheless, they remain equally relevant to "general English" classes.

4.5 4 Frameworks of Communicative Competence

Since communicative competence came to be seen as including knowledge beyond merely the grammatical and incorporating the language user's ability to access that knowledge *in performance*, a number of componential frameworks have been proposed, each attempting to capture - sometimes in quite precise terms - what it is that enables the native speaker to communicate effectively and efficiently.

4.5.1 Hymes's 4 Parameters

Hymes sees the systems of rules underlying communicative behaviour as analysable in terms of four parameters:

1. Whether (and to what extent) something is formally *possible*;
2. Whether (and to what extent) something is *feasible*;
3. Whether (and to what extent) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated;
4. Whether (and to what extent) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails.

(Hymes 1971, p. 12)

He observes: "Knowledge also is to be understood as subtending all four parameters of communication just noted. There is knowledge of each. Ability for use also may relate to all four parameters" (1972, pp. 282-3).

Hymes's reference to "ability for use" is somewhat ambiguous in that it fails to make clear whether what is being claimed is the existence of

4 distinct abilities each relating to one of the four parameters, or a singular, general ability (essentially 'performance') relating to all four parameters. While Widdowson (1989, p. 130) opts for the former interpretation, it is difficult to make sense of the notion of *ability to be feasible* both in itself and as distinct from the ability, say, to be appropriate. Further, how is one to distinguish between the ability to do what is known to occur (i.e. what is attested) and the ability to be both grammatical, feasible and appropriate? Surely ability to do what is attested in native speaker speech implies ability to be grammatical, feasible and appropriate, for by and large attestedness presupposes grammaticality, feasibility and appropriateness, except in cases where performance errors make themselves felt. Were it *not* so, the language would be deemed unacceptable within the speech community, and on this basis unlikely to occur in the first place. Thus it seems more likely that Hymes is speaking of a general ability controlled by one set of psychological processes governing access to all linguistic knowledge; an idea similar to Bialystok's variable control factor (re. 3.3.1) which determines the ease of access the learner has to the various kinds of knowledge those such as Hymes have identified, and which operates according to task type and learner type.

It is worthy of note that in providing the four distinct areas of competence that it does, Hymes's framework can be viewed as a convenient heuristic tool which allows one to identify the three general approaches that have been taken historically in defining the conditions of adequacy of a linguistic description. Thus Chomsky, for example, could be said to have been concerned merely with the possible (parameter 1) at the expense of performance considerations implicit in the notions of feasibility, appropriacy and attestedness. Those of Hallidayan persuasion, on the other hand, see a need to account for both the possible and the appropriate (parameters 1 & 3), for language is seen as being informed by the appropriate; it is an encoding of those social functions language has evolved to serve. Finally, advocates of corpus linguistics equate the possible with the attested (parameters 1 & 4) believing as they do that the only language which is real is that which actually occurs.

4.5.2 Spolsky's Framework

Generally viewed as an elaboration of Hymes, Spolsky's 1978 framework of what constitutes a complete description of the individual's

communicative competence covers five dimensions he considers essential:

1. Linguistic dimension: lexicon, semantics, grammar, phonology.
2. Channels: oral-aural, speech-writing, gesture.
3. Code dimension: (a) varieties available—languages, regional dialects, social dialects, styles, registers; (b) control of code selection rules.
4. Topic dimension: what can be talked about.
5. Setting dimension: ability to function in various domains (home, school, work, community, etc.)

(Spolsky 1978, p. 126)

Spolsky's first dimension corresponds to Hymes's first parameter, while his third, fourth and fifth dimensions are essentially a reformulation of Hymes's third parameter. Spolsky, however, does not appear to have an equivalent to Hymes's parameters of feasibility and attestedness, unless these are implicit in his first parameter, and third, fourth and fifth parameters respectively. That is, in the first case (feasibility) Spolsky may be incorrectly assuming processability, whilst in the second case (attestedness) he may be taking for granted that what is appropriate language behaviour according to parameters 1, 3, 4 and 5 is also attested, despite Hymes observation that it is possible for a sentence to be formally correct, feasible and appropriate, yet not actually manifested in speech or writing.

Conversely, Hymes makes no mention in his framework of "channel" or mode of communication, Spolsky's second dimension, again perhaps because he takes it as given that his four parameters apply to all modes of communication - possibly with the exception of *gesture* which does not appear to relate at least to parameters 1 and 2.

4.5.3 Canale and Swain's Framework

With the shift toward a communicative paradigm in language teaching gaining momentum during the 70s, the question of how to *test* communicative ability became important. Indeed, as if in preparation, Spolsky had in 1968 already debated the relationship between functionalism and assessment. He observed:

> A more promising approach might be to work for a functional definition of levels: we should aim not to test how much of a language someone knows, but test his ability to operate in a specific sociolinguistic situation with specified ease or effect. The preparation of proficiency tests like this would not start from a list of language items, but from a statement of language function.
>
> (Spolsky 1968, p. 93)

Somewhat later, Wilkins likewise expressed his concern with establishing a means of communicative testing when he stated:

> We do not know how to establish the communicative proficiency of the learner...while some people are experimenting with the notional syllabus as such, others should be attempting to develop new testing techniques that should, ideally accompany it.
>
> (Wilkins 1976, p. 82)

If the question of how to test communicative ability was to be satisfactorily answered, there had to be some means of describing what that ability entailed, for as Spolsky was to note:

> One cannot develop sound language tests without a method of defining what it means to know a language, for until you have decided what you are measuring, you cannot claim to have measured it.
>
> (Spolsky 1989, pp. 138-59)

It was largely in response to this need that Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a framework, subsequently refined by Canale (1983), and identifying four components of communicative competence - again, components approximating to those first established by Hymes and reformulated by Spolsky. These have become widely accepted as a basis for curriculum design and language assessment as well as for classroom practice (see, for example, Savignon 1983). They are:

> *Grammatical Competence* - Mastery of the structural properties of language;
> *Sociolinguistic Competence* - The understanding of social context and rules of appropriacy upon which successful communication is based;
> *Discourse Competence* - The interpretation/production of language in terms of its relationship to the discourse as a whole and according to

inferencing skills based on an understanding of principles of cohesion and coherence;

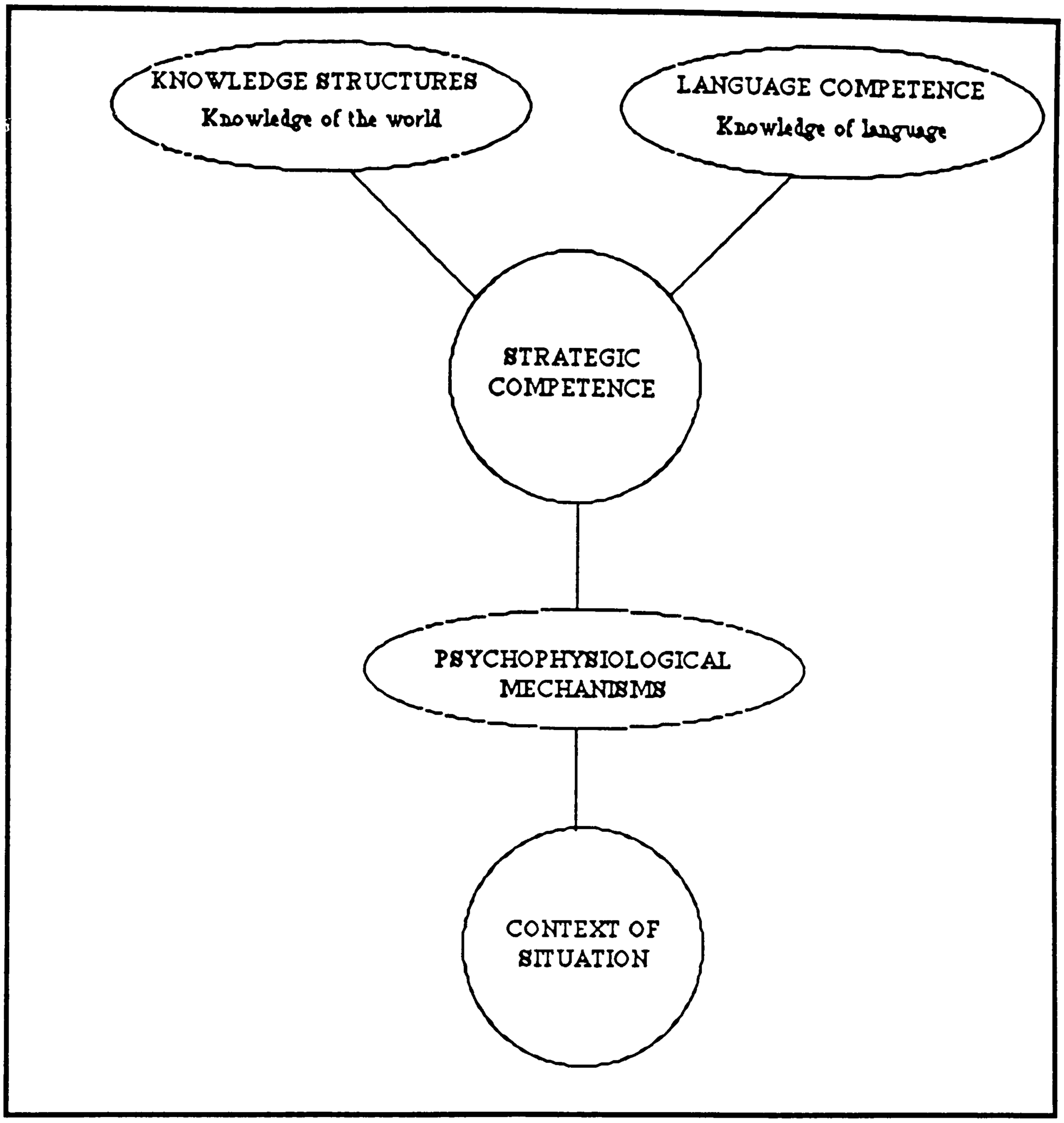
Strategic Competence - The ability to compensate for obstacles to performance and to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

Canale and Swain's strategic competence would appear to be somewhat analogous to Hymes's "ability" if, as I propose, this is to be interpreted in unitary terms. However, while both components refer to the individual's capacity to access knowledge of the language under performance constraints, Canale and Swain seem to go a step further in suggesting that strategic competence also involves going beyond available knowledge to alternative sources or means of communication in order to convey meaning in circumstances where the knowledge required is either non-existent or inaccessible. In other words, while "ability" refers solely to the capacity to access existent knowledge in authentic communication, "strategic competence" includes, in addition, the capacity to compensate for a lack of such knowledge through whatever means, linguistic or otherwise, are available.

Grammatical and sociolinguistic competence would seem to correspond closely to Hymes's possibility and appropriacy parameters respectively, although one wonders how Hymes accounts for discourse competence. Given that notions such as cohesion and coherence are subject to certain structural conditions and relationships (the grammatical) as well as to contextual idiosyncrasies (the appropriate), there is arguably a case for saying that it is dealt with jointly by both possibility and appropriacy parameters.

4.5.4 Bachman's Framework of "Communicative Language Ability"

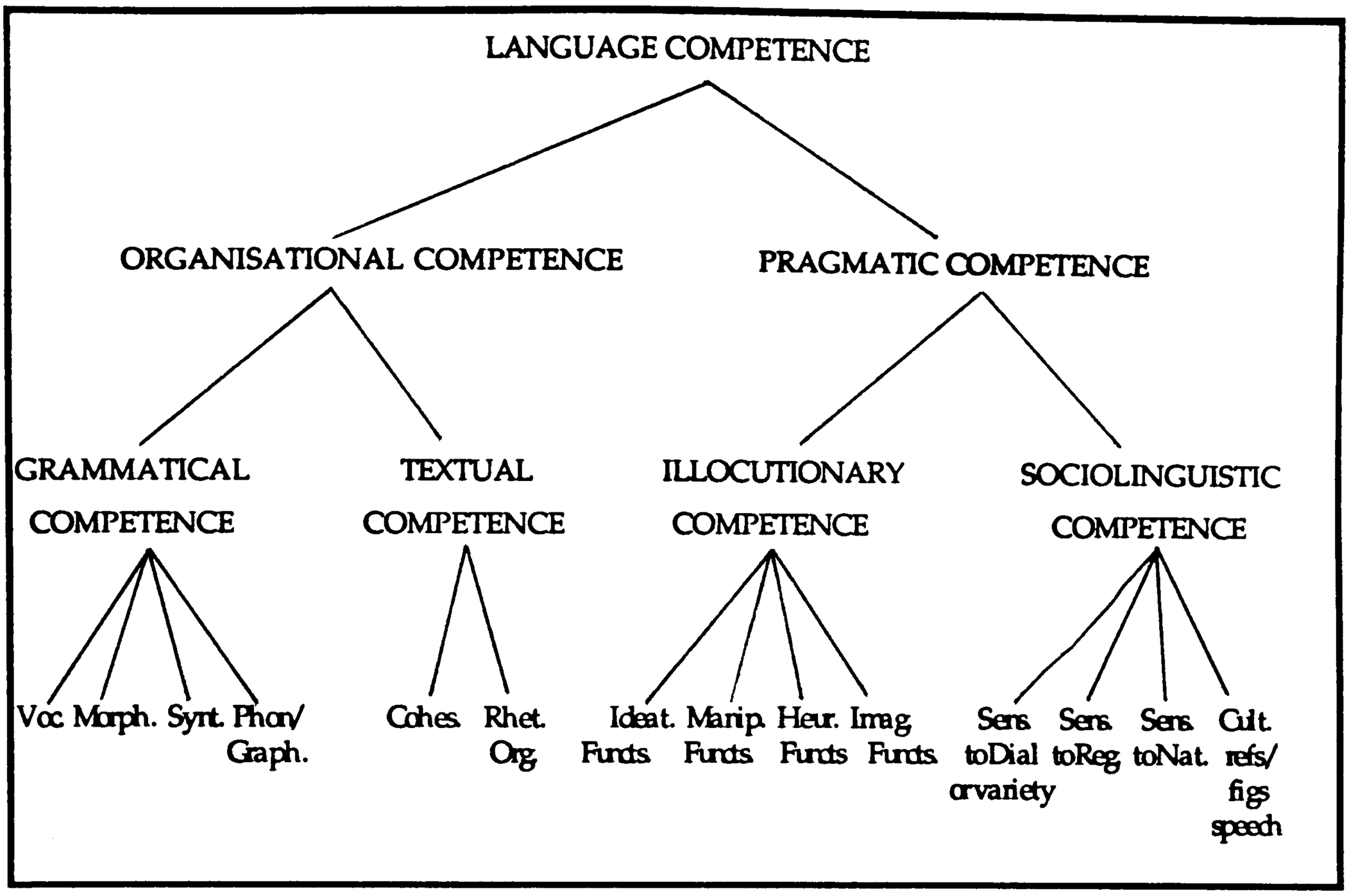
Designed for reasons similar to those motivating Canale and Swain, namely as a sound basis on which to develop tests of communicative proficiency in foreign languages, Bachman's framework (1990) - notably detailed in its breakdown of "language competence" - offers yet another and more recent perspective on the issue of what constitutes communicative competence, or what he calls "communicative language ability". It consists of the following five elements:



Bachman's "Components of communicative language ability in communicative language use" (1990, p. 85)

Figure 3

Bachman breaks down his *language competence* component to form the following inverted tree:



Bachman's "Components of Language Competence" (1990, p. 87)

Figure 4

As Bachman is aware (ibid., p. 84) certain of these components are found in other frameworks of communicative competence, although this is not always apparent. What Bachman for example refers to as "sociolinguistic" and "illocutionary competence", Canale and Swain and Hymes refer to in unitary terms as "sociolinguistic competence" and the appropriacy condition respectively. These latter two terms seem to coincide with Bachman's superordinate term "pragmatic competence". "Grammatical competence" for Bachman is the same for Canale and Swain, while Hymes speaks of "possibility". What Bachman terms "textual competence" appears to be similar to Canale and Swain's notion of "discourse competence". Hymes's "feasibility" would presumably be part of the psychophysiological component appearing in Bachman's model of communicative language use, rather than part of the language competence module. Finally, consistent with my reading of Canale and Swain's "strategic competence" as "ability", Bachman uses the term "to characterise the mental capacity for implementing the components of

language competence in contexualized communicative language use" (1990, p. 84).

Without going into questions such as how "pragmatic competence" can be treated independently of "context of situation" and "knowledge structures", what Bachman's 'model' in particular illustrates very well once again, is the confusion caused by a lack of parity in terminology and interpretation, as well as a lack of concern with inter-relating different models or frameworks which seek to describe similar phenomena. This brief analysis was intended merely to provide an overview of proposed frameworks rather than an in-depth contrastive study, yet what becomes clear, nevertheless, is that each of the frameworks looked at has a good deal in common with its counterparts; each are slight variations on a common theme, but the fundamental unity of vision they share is obfuscated by a seeming unwillingness to acknowledge and build upon prior contributions to the enquiry of what underlies communicative competence.

4.6 2 Criteria for Assessing Frameworks of Communicative Competence

Frameworks of communicative competence may be assessed according to (i) whether they are valid descriptions of what is involved in native/native-like speaker communication, and (ii) whether they have pedagogical utility. These two criteria are related in that to say a proposition is valid is to say very little unless that proposition is in some way 'significant'; and significance can only be determined according to whether the proposition has utility either in terms of its practical consequences, or by virtue of the fact that it extends the boundaries of theoretical understanding by elucidating concepts and issues and/or their inter-relationships. Theoretical utility is, of course, rarely - if ever - an end in itself, for the clarification of concepts and ideas is a process ultimately designed to enable us to further manipulate or alter the way in which we interact with our environment, immediate or otherwise. While these practical effects may be delayed, even hidden, during the early stages of this process, a 'faith' of sorts is placed in the proposition which thus becomes a kind of intellectual investment. This is the case even at the

most abstract levels of mathematical reasoning. Always there exists some practical application, payoff or "utility".

As it relates to frameworks of communicative competence, the question of validity is an interesting one as it provides, among other things, further evidence for claims of unclarity and ambiguity in the CLT package. Based as they are upon insights into language use that most of us as native speakers are never called upon to articulate and analyse but which we naturally and gradually inherit by virtue of our contact with language, these frameworks would seem in this sense to be intuitively valid as static descriptions of the kinds of knowledge and ability necessary for effective communication. However, a proposition's validity depends upon whether or not it lives up to the claims made of it, and if the above frameworks are claimed to be *complete* descriptions of what constitutes communicative competence, then they cannot be judged valid for one important reason: being communicatively competent entails a (sub-conscious) understanding of the ways in which the different components of competence *interact* in communication and the ability to negotiate meaning accordingly in a potentially infinite number of different contexts. It is nonsensical to suppose that speakers regard as psychologically distinct knowledge and its performance, the intellectual reality of the elements of communicative competence and their instantaneous synthesis in communication. Frameworks such as Hymes's, Spolsky's, Canale and Swain's and Bachman's fail to capture this interactive aspect of communication and consequently cannot, strictly speaking, qualify as "models" (see Brindley 1986 and Weir 1990), although clearly many choose to refer to them as such. Thus although Bachman, for example, uses arrows to imply the interactiveness of the components he proposes (see figure 3) and states that his framework "...attempts to characterise the processes by which the various components interact with each other and with the context in which language use occurs" (1990, p. 81), he makes only a rather superficial attempt to describe in precise terms the *nature* of the relationships existing between them and how they might operate together in language use. No substantial psycholinguistic evidence is offered as a basis for insights into their interaction. However, before judging his and other frameworks invalid on this basis, three questions require consideration:

(i) Are these frameworks of communicative competence *intended* as comprehensive in the sense of providing descriptions not only of the

components that make up communicative competence, but also their interactional characteristics in language use? - We seem to be left uncertain as to the proposers' intentions in this regard.

(ii) Is a comprehensive description of the interactional characteristics of the components of communicative competence feasible? - Given the vast scale and complexity of such a task, I would suggest not - a point I shall argue further in Chapter 5.

(iii) Would a model which was comprehensive in the sense of (i) above have any significance for the way in which we most effectively *learn* foreign languages? - As I seek to illustrate in Chapter 5, there is little in the way of substantial evidence to indicate that it would.

These three considerations suggest the most that can be claimed of frameworks of communicative competence is that they a offer static, if somewhat disparate accounts of the kinds of parameters that need to be set or manipulated in effective and appropriate communication. And, it must be said, this is generally the role such frameworks are seen as having regardless of the intentions of their designers, and again, given their affinity in this regard to what most of us as language speakers instinctively know about language use, they can fairly be judged valid in these terms.

The question of how *useful* these accounts are is the focus of the next chapter and ultimately leads to a re-analysis and (in many cases) resolution of the problems and confusions highlighted in sections 3.2 and 3.3. Because of its very considerable implicational significance, it is a question that warrants the attention of a complete chapter. At this juncture, however, it is worth making two general points: Firstly, frameworks of communicative competence provide insights into the communicative process; insights which make explicit (if only in rather broad, componential terms) the dynamics of communication which, as we have seen, operate below the level of awareness, yet constitute the parameters according to which we constantly control or 'tune' our language in response to its situation of use. These insights set broad guidelines as to those features of communication that require consideration in the design and implementation of syllabi, as well as to the nature of evaluation procedures and assessment criteria (grade descriptors etc.) that aim to comment on the communicative ability of language learners. In essence, such frameworks have utility in that they give a degree of meaning or substance to the notion of 'language as use' that is interpretable in pedagogical terms. The degree of specificity to

which it is so interpretable, however, is a key point of discussion to be taken up in Chapter 5, part of which involves, among other things, a brief commentary on what SLA research has contributed over the last twenty five years to our understanding of the language learning process.

The second point of note concerns the difference in levels of detail between Hymes's original breakdown of communicative competence into four aspects, and more recent frameworks such as that of Bachman's (comprising fourteen) - a difference which is only too striking and prompts one to question the relative utility of each of the two approaches. Clearly, inverted trees of the kind Bachman presents are infinitely sub-divisible, as indeed are Hymes's 4 aspects, and whether one chooses to view communicative competence frameworks merely as static componential descriptions, or alternatively as thoroughgoing interactive descriptions, it would seem to be the case that detail is inversely proportional to potential utility. In the case of static componential descriptions, it is unrealistic to expect pedagogues to take account of fourteen features of language use when devising and implementing a language learning programme.

The potential for complexity, however, becomes greater still - significantly so - if one views communicative competence frameworks as interactive descriptions, for the more detailed a componential description of language use a framework provides, the more detailed and intricate needs to be any description of the interactions between the components it specifies; and the more intricate the description, the more remote is the possibility of establishing the SLA research necessary to ascertain how that description relates to the process of learning, and thus of translating the framework into a soundly-based pedagogical programme of instruction which allows flexibility of teaching style according to learning context.

The issue, then, becomes one of how best to strike a balance between providing enough description to be of significant service to pedagogy, and restricting the scope of that description so as not to compromise utility. To return to the map analogy: for a map to be useful, it needs to provide only enough information to effectively enable the user to locate as efficiently as possible whichever place or route he wishes to find. If that map is crammed with the minutest detail, whilst it may provide a thorough description of the area to which it applies and in that respect be praiseworthy, as far as the user is concerned, such integrity compromises its utility and in a sense serves only to complicate his task.

Chapter 5

Assessing the Utility of Frameworks of Communicative Competence

5.1 Linking the Means of Learning to the Ends of Learning

Although the product of a panoply of theoretical shifts and developments spanning a range of disciplines, communicative language teaching was, as we have seen, essentially born of a need - hitherto unmet by earlier methods and approaches - to empower foreign language students to cope effectively and *appropriately* with the variety and spontaneity of real-life communication. Given this basic premise, it follows that any framework or model of communicative competence - of what it is componentially and interactionally that enables the native speaker to communicate as he does - can be said to have utility, and thus boast a raison d'être, predominantly to the extent that it provides a theoretical basis for pedagogical practices which promote that ability in foreign language learners. Thus, by implication, any comprehensive assessment of utility needs to take into account not merely the adequacy of such frameworks as 'static' descriptions of the knowledge and ability underlying language use, but also, and more importantly, their procedural representation and the nature of the link that exists - or potentially exists - between these facets of language use (which constitute the ends of learning) and the means by which they are/may be achieved. Given that it is the job of a theory of learning to characterise the nature of this relationship between process and product, it follows that descriptions of what constitutes communicative competence are only as pedagogically useful as the learning theories through which they are implemented are valid. As we shall see, this fact is crucial to any assessment of communicative competence theory and our analysis of CLT. In particular, it has strong implications for the role of authenticity in language teaching.

5.2 Communicative Language Teaching and the 'Authenticity' Solution

CLT has, without doubt, come to be regarded as the pedagogical realisation of communicative competence theory. While, as we have noted, the goals of this approach are ultimately common to almost all methods and approaches to foreign language teaching, the process via which those goals are realised in CLT is driven by a "product informs process" philosophy. This allows the approach to adorn communicative competence theory with a mantle of utility via the central principle of *authenticity* in which that philosophy is encapsulated, and which guides its enactment at the level of pedagogical application. Clarke and Silberstein state:

> Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message, not the medium.
>
> (Clarke and Silberstein 1977, p. 51; as cited quoted in Nunan 1989)

In effect, the authenticity principle *mediates* between product (what communicative competence frameworks tell us about language in use) and process (the pedagogical configuration that will most efficaciously promote communicatively competent learners). The reasoning by which the notion of authenticity serves to link process and product - the means to the ends of learning - is concisely described by Widdowson thus:

> If learners are to acquire communicative competence to be deployed in contexts of use, then it is that which they must experience in contexts of learning.
>
> (Widdowson 1992, p. 306)

In similar vein, Richards and Rodgers comment:

> Common to all versions of Communicative Language Teaching ...is a theory of language teaching that starts from a communicative model of language and language use, and that seeks to translate this into a design for an instructional system, for materials, for teacher and learner roles and behaviors, and for classroom activities and techniques.
>
> (Richards and Rodgers 1986, p. 69)

5.3 Two Aspects of Pedagogical Utility... & One More Ambiguity

Frameworks of communicative competence potentially may offer pedagogical utility in two ways:

(i) Through guiding syllabus design,

(ii) Through guiding methodology (the selection and presentation of materials) within those confines established by the syllabus.

Given the role of the authenticity principle as 'go-between', this division of utility is consequently reflected in two corresponding types of authenticity: authenticity of syllabus and authenticity of methodology (materials/materials presentation). These two types of authenticity highlight a further unclarity which has plagued CLT; namely what it is exactly that "authentic" is predicated of. While the term is liberally bandied about in reference to CLT, interpretations of it appear to vary, some associating it with syllabus design, others with materials and classroom techniques, and still others with both these things or various combinations of their constituents.

5.3.1 Authenticity of Syllabus

The notion of authenticity, for the communicativist, allows for the translation of descriptions of communicative competence into a basis for syllabus design via the presupposition that language and the ability to use it appropriately in different contexts are acquired *through* communication, and that what the syllabus dictates should be dealt with in the classroom ought solely to reflect the idea of language as use. This is tantamount to prescribing the implementation of either notional-functional, interactional or task-based syllabi where there is an explicit specification of linguistic product and the emphasis is on purposeful language and the speech act, and it constitutes a perspective which entails what Howatt, in describing the philosophy of the "strong version" of CLT, refers to as "using English to learn it" (1984, p. 279). The Natural Approach to language teaching very much embodies this point of view in placing an uncompromising emphasis on language use and exposure to 'the genuine article' as a precondition of learning. Indeed, Krashen and Terrell themselves view the Natural Approach as an example of a

communicative approach and observe that communication goals "may be expressed in terms of situations, functions and topics" (1983, p. 67). They go on to say:

> ...we do not expect the students at the end of a particular course to have acquired a certain group of structures or forms. Instead we expect them to deal with a particular set of topics in a given situation.
>
> (Krashen & Terrell 1983, p. 71)

While one might wish to question just *how* learners are expected to deal with a particular set of topics in a given situation without having acquired certain structures or forms, the main point of note here is the underlying intention to base language teaching/learning practices not on an unnatural analysis of the language code, but on the behavioural or situational aspects of communication outside the classroom.

There are two main and related criticisms that may be levied against CLT's attempt to give pedagogical currency to frameworks of communicative competence by applying the authenticity principle to syllabus design. Firstly, although syllabi such as the notional-functional syllabus are authentic in *potentially* bringing together or encapsulating all components of communicative competence, as well as in mirroring the purposes for which we use language and the concepts underlying them (re. speech acts and the social dimension of language), it is arguably the case that any other syllabus, whether structurally or functionally inclined, or both, can equally be taught communicatively, and thus its authenticity or otherwise becomes for all intents and purposes irrelevant. Johnson emphasises this point when he observes that:

> we judge a course communicative or otherwise not only (nor even, we might argue, predominantly) in terms of how it is organised, but also in terms of its methodology. Viewed in this light it is certainly possible to imagine a notional/functional course which, because of its methodology, we would wish to call communicative. Likewise we may find a structurally-organised course whose methodology practises important aspects of the communicative skill and is thus more worthy of the title 'communicative'.
>
> (Johnson 1981, p. 11)

In the same volume, Morrow restates the point thus:

> The mere adoption of a notional (or, more specifically, functional) syllabus does not guarantee that we are going to teach our students to communicate.
>
> (Morrow 1981, p. 60)

In other words, how a syllabus is realised methodologically is not causally determined by its theoretical orientation, although it will of course provide the broadest parameters for classroom activity; indeed, if methodology were completely ungoverned, then a syllabus would be irrelevant to pedagogy.

This independence of methodology vis à vis the syllabus means that even *if* the findings in SLA pertaining to a natural order of acquisition were ultimately proven to be incontrovertible enough to imply sequential learning in accordance with that order (as they have yet to do), the ways in which those features of language might be presented to the learner are multifold, for due consideration would still need to be given to our theoretical understanding of various other factors (learner style, the affect, context etc.) that contribute to the effective acquisition, or otherwise, of a second language. In other words, while a structural syllabus might appear to lend itself to the organisation of those discrete items of grammar that are the focus of natural order studies, this fact does not - and ought not - to automatically necessitate the use of structural methods when there exist alternatives which are more effective in taking such kinds of factors into account.

Even if one chooses to persevere with the notion that a syllabus necessarily defines the nature of the methodology through which it is implemented, there is a further problem which undermines the credibility of claims for an authentic syllabus; namely, there exists no theory of learning soundly rooted in second language acquisition research which allows adherents of the strong form of CLT to assume that we acquire foreign languages more effectively when the programme of learning is organised according to categories reflecting the potential uses (where these are specifiable) to which learners may put the target language. That is, there is nothing in the way of incontrovertible evidence to suggest that learning a foreign language through the notions and functions underlying language use is any better an investment in terms of overall learning of the L2 than is a structurally oriented programme of learning - a point

closely linked with criticisms levelled at the application of the *process=product* formula to methodology in Chapters 2 and 3.

The fact that CLT is most commonly realised through a notional-functional syllabus reflects what is in fact a limited interpretation of 'authentic language', an interpretation which stresses Hymes's third parameter governing communicative behaviour (i.e. his appropriateness condition) whilst for the most part ignoring his second and fourth conditions of feasibility and attestedness respectively; i.e. the processing capabilities of the individual and whether or not language specified in the syllabus actually occurs in the outside world.

By including items such as "offering/responding to an invitation" and "making a request", the notional-functional syllabus is clearly focusing on contextually apt behaviour patterns based on an underlying format of the kind: 'If X happens, you are expected to do Y' or 'If person A does X, you can expect person B to do Y'. This is Hymes's condition of appropriacy. Now, clearly, acting or reacting appropriately to a particular set of contextual conditions involves not only an appreciation of the kind of speech act that is called for, but also the ability to realise it in language which has been attested. In this sense Hymes's two conditions are closely related. Unfortunately, what communicativists would wish to call *attested* language is in reality little more than native speaker/textbook-writer intuition, failing as it does to derive from a computer analysis of actually occurring data. While it *may* be attested language, it cannot strictly be confirmed as such in the absence of a corpus analysis.

There is likewise little evidence that the authors of notional-functional textbooks give any serious consideration to the issue of cognition in learning, to what is processable given the state of development of the learner's interlanguage. While, admittedly, Hymes's second condition of feasibility is concerned with the competence of the native/native-like speaker rather than that of the learner, and one cannot *learn* 'processability' in the way that one can learn appropriacy, well-formedness, or indeed attestedness, nevertheless, in teaching language, the mental ability of the learner to absorb what is being presented to him needs to be considered if he is to learn effectively. Even Krashen - frequently associated with a stronger version of CLT - accepts this as the basis for his input hypothesis and the idea of an optimal net which involves teachers rough-tuning their input according to the developmental level of the learner's interlanguage. Notional-functional

textbooks, however, generally present learners with a selection of topics and a series of 'authentic'/'authentic-like' activities and seem to assume that learners will somehow cope with the processing demands those topics/activities throw up. Again there is little analysis of just what processing demands the various forms through which the notions and functions chosen are realised place upon learners, and any kind of adjustment in this respect is left to the teacher's intuitions if it is to occur at all.

This promotion of appropriacy at the expense of feasibility is, I would suggest, in large part responsible for the common phenomenon of learners taught by communicative methods failing to achieve at the rate and to the degree one might hope (re. 3.3.1).

These issues lead one to a consideration of what people mean by 'authentic language', and one way of approaching this question is to relate different interpretations to Hymes's framework of communicative competence. On that basis, as we have seen, adherents of the communicative approach would appear to be operating according to an interpretation which views authentic language as language which is possible and appropriate, but not necessarily feasible and attested.

In contrast, within the tradition of structural language teaching authentic language meant formally correct language - Hymes's first condition of possibility. For the structuralist the third condition of appropriateness did not really enter into the equation, the underlying assumption being that once the linguistic system was internalised, appropriacy would follow - the 'investment principle' as we have seen (section 3.3.1). Thus, authenticity of form was seen as more important than that of appropriacy, at least in learning. Likewise, while feasibility was generally taken into account through the careful - if somewhat dubiously based - grading of material, attestation was by and large ignored; hence the proliferation of language of the "Jane plays with the ball" and "I like Spot" variety. Such sentences are a characteristic feature of structurally based textbooks simply because they are seen as easily processable, yet they rarely, if ever, feature in the real world. So too with method of presentation; the kind of repetitive drilling commonly associated with audiolingualism was seen as crucial to the learning process, presenting language in a format that was designed not to overstep the processing limits of the learner.

There is arguably a case even for introducing structurally incorrect language (i.e. inauthentic language in terms of "possibility") in the interest of presenting easily processable language (i.e. authentic language in terms of "feasibility") into the classroom; the assumption here being that correctness is gradually shaped over time, and that the nature of a particular form can sometimes be more easily accessed (or recognised) and understood by learners at a given level within a linguistic context that is structurally deviant.

The fact is that while in the normal context of language use Hymes's 4 factors are all neatly correlated and we do not, for example, normally produce language that is feasible but not possible, in learning this is not so; indeed were it so, there would be little need for learning in the first place. The question thus becomes: "How does one shape pedagogy so that all 4 factors most effectively come into alignment in the process of language learning?". This is essentially a question of methodology and because, as we have seen, the syllabus does not causally determine methodology, the nature of the syllabus - and in this case the notional-functional syllabus in particular - is for the most part an irrelevance. Generally it will do little more than place a primary emphasis on one or two of Hymes's four parameters and leave the language teacher to tie in as effectively as he can the other two aspects. What basis the syllabus provides for the alignment of the 4 factors and what the teacher is left to contribute and the learner to infer depends upon the way the underlying teaching approach has lined up those four factors. In the case of structural approaches, the syllabus provides the possible and feasible and requires the integration of input relating to the appropriate and attested. In more functional approaches, on the other hand, the syllabus emphasises the possible and appropriate and requires the integration of input relating to the feasible and attested.

It seems to be the case, therefore, that although CLT has acquired a kind of monopoly over the term 'authentic', it is in fact no more authentic in its approach to language than other more structurally inclined methods; it merely places the emphasis in learning on different aspects of communicative competence, and any suggestion of an all-encompassing authenticity of syllabus which accounts for all four of Hymes's conditions is almost certainly misled.

5.3.2 Authenticity of Methodology

Methodology refers to the mode of presentation of those items specified in the syllabus and may be described in terms of the types of techniques employed in the classroom, and the nature of the materials (texts, realia etc.) used. In both these areas, CLT strives to create an 'authentic' learning context by involving learners in situations they might encounter in an L2 environment. Again, implicit in such efforts is the belief that second language acquisition is most effectively promoted by creating conditions that mimic those of first language acquisition, and that by purposefully engaging with the kinds of activities and materials that typically feature in an L2 environment, the learner will somehow deduce, internalise and synthesise the kinds of knowledge and ability that make up communicative competence. This is a questionable assumption and one that faces a similar criticism in both areas of methodology, techniques and materials.

Authentic Classroom Techniques: These may be broadly and summarily described as the types of activities, roles and decision-making learners of communicative classrooms are involved in; for example, task-completion/problem-solving exercises, role-play and other activities (or aspects of activities) specified by Littlewood in his taxonomy discussed in Chapter 2.

It needs to be said at the outset that clearly activities espoused by proponents of CLT such as information-gap exercises (where, for example, individual A - sitting opposite B - has information required by B and vice-versa and each conceals his information from the other who needs to reason and negotiate meaning in order to obtain it) are *not* authentic. Such kinds of situation would be highly unlikely to arise outside the classroom. Thus while widely seen as realising the notion of authenticity at the level of pedagogical application, such activities in point of fact do nothing of the sort, distinctly failing to simulate those kinds of activities characteristic of engagements in the L2. Where they derive a 'semi-authenticity', however, (if indeed such a term can sensibly be used) is in the types of cognitive processes they stimulate in the learner, and in particular the motivation they create in him to engage with pragmatic meaning, or message, in the way native speakers are constantly doing; a motivation achieved as a by-product of the desire or intention (characteristic of most naturalistic communication) to complete the task set.

All too often, however, this kind of cognitive stimulation and creation of motivation is non-existent, and the characteristic role plays etc. that feature in so many 'communicative' textbooks are often little more than substitution drills with students simply filling in conversational frameworks. Yet because those frameworks represent possible scenarios and the language appears 'authentic', the activity *as a whole* is mistakenly judged to be authentic. In other words, while the way in which they are framed tends to carry conviction through achieving a kind of token authenticity based on situational and linguistic integrity, in reality these activities are not true to life in that they restrict learner autonomy.

Authentic Materials: "Authentic materials" refers to the nature of the language used in the classroom and the media through which it is manifested and presented to learners. As such the category might typically include printed matter such as newspaper articles, menus, brochures, maps etc., and audio-visual material such as radio/television news programmes and documentaries, or video footage taken of genuine native-speaker interactions. In essence, these materials signal an effort to expose learners to native speaker language within its original context of use.

It is worth noting that so-called "authentic-like" materials which attempt to artificially recreate, or simulate these conditions are frequently used as substitutes and indeed frequently constitute a major proportion of many 'communicative' textbooks. Whether such materials adequately fulfil their role as substitutes is an open question, although one might again wish to argue that to speak of anything as "authentic-like" is nonsensical and a contradiction in terms. Things are either authentic or they are not.

5.3.2.1 Some Problems with 'Authentic' Methodology

The most serious problem with applying the authenticity principle to methodology is the absence of a soundly-based theory of learning to support the idea that by creating contexts of language use in the classroom that seek to mimic real-world contexts, and encouraging learners to do what native speakers do and engage with the kind of language typical of the 'real world', learners will somehow perceive and internalise features of the language and a matrix of the interactive characteristics of the various competences. While this idea is undoubtedly an intuitively

attractive one, perhaps because it closely parallels first language acquisition, many a teacher will be only too familiar with the reality that engagement with authentic language in authentic or semi-authentic contexts of use does not produce learners with a well-rounded competence in the language, but rather with a repertoire of (often short-cut, if effective) communication strategies frequently involving deviant linguistic forms. Schmidt (1983) provides a good example of this phenomenon in his report on the case of Wes, a Japanese learner of English in Hawaii whose communicative competence was assessed in relation to Canale and Swain's framework, discussed in Chapter 4. While Wes's strategic competence showed the greatest signs of development, and to a lesser degree his discourse competence, progress in the other domains - and particularly linguistic competence - was negligible. As Skehan subsequently observed:

> ...communicative effectiveness was achieved largely through the use of communication strategies, and this progress did not spill over into the other, more structural domains ...So "unbalanced" language development was, in this case, associated with fossilisation and a plateaued linguistic competence.
>
> (Skehan 1992 p. 184)

Providing learners with authentic language is no guarantee that they will notice it and therefore learn from it, and the kinds of activities associated with CLT encourage learners away from any concern with form by leading them to place too great an emphasis on completing the task. As such CLT activities serve more as opportunities to practise what is already known rather than to learn what is not. While the transition by learners from a semantic to a pragmatic meaning focus in communication must surely be a goal of communicative methodology and a necessary rite of passage prior to the acquisition of communicative competence, the evidence available (e.g. Spada 1986) points to a need for formal properties of the language to be noticed if this is to be achieved. While no such transition takes place in first language acquisition where semantic meaning takes care of itself simultaneous to our pragmatic engagement with the language (i.e. Hymes's conditions of appropriacy and possibility are 'automatically' correlated or aligned - see 5.3.1, p. 7 above), the same, it seems, cannot be said of second language acquisition and any claims to the contrary would appear to constitute little more than an act of faith.

5.4 The Poverty of 'Use'-Oriented SLA Research, and the Communicative Competence Theory-SLA Theory Divide

The piece of the jigsaw that is missing and which I have claimed is crucial if CLT is to provide frameworks of communicative competence with utility via the notion of authenticity, is a research-driven theory of learning; a theory which, as stated at the outset of this chapter, links the means to the ends of learning. The fact that such a theory does not as yet exist serves to help highlight a fundamental division of inquiry that has taken place between second language acquisition theory and communicative competence theory; a division alluded to in Chapter 1 and spanning approximately twenty-five years.

While SLA theory has chosen to concern itself with the language learning *process* in terms of a description of the cognitive mechanisms that enable us to learn foreign languages and those parameters which govern or control the way we do so, communicative competence theory has, in contrast, focused on the product of learning and a description of language use and the kinds of knowledge and ability necessary for effective and appropriate communication. Virtually the only point of coincidence between the two areas of endeavour has been in discussions of the affect in learning as well as of interlanguage - and in particular Tarone's notion of *systematic variability* (1982, 1983) which provides a sociolinguistic perspective to the debate by attempting to relate language style to social context, proposing as it does that "variability in the interlanguage can be accounted for by a system of variable and categorical rules based on particular contexts of use" which "...range along a continuum of styles from formal to vernacular" (McLaughlin 1987, p. 64).

One important result of this division of inquiry is a lack of SLA research that exhibits a concern for projected language use in context, a facet regarded by many involved in this strand of investigation as of little or no consequence to a learning process that is seen as implying the existence of a language acquisition device which places psychological constraints upon the grammatical forms we acquire and the order in which we acquire them (see for example Pienemann 1984, 1986). As yet, SLA research tells us virtually nothing about the acquisition of functionally defined elements of language (however these might be divided up - a complex issue in itself), or, for that matter, about the relationships between structural and functional elements of the language

as these bear upon the acquisition process. To date, the main object of its focus has been grammatical competence in isolation - and a relatively few linguistic structures at that - a situation which among other things, has led some to seriously question the validity of such findings.[4]

5.5 Early Conclusions

Even at this stage, then, one might wish to draw a tentative conclusion that communicative competence frameworks have no utility as far as CLT is concerned; a distinct irony given our observation that CLT is widely and reasonably regarded as the pedagogical realisation of those frameworks. Any apparent utility resulting from applying the authenticity (product = process) principle to syllabus design is undermined (i) by the absence of a data-driven theory of learning which supports the idea that foreign languages are more successfully acquired where learning is organised according to categories designed to reflect anticipated uses of those languages; (ii) by the contingent nature of the relationship existing between syllabus and methodology which for all intents and purposes renders the authenticity principle irrelevant to classroom teaching practices; and (iii) by the overly narrow interpretation given to authentic language as "language which is *appropriate*".

Nor is there very much in the way of methodological utility to recommend communicative competence frameworks. As with the syllabus, methodological utility is sought through the mediation of the authenticity principle; but again there exists no firmly rooted learning theory to lend credence to the notion that by creating classrooms which attempt to mimic real world contexts, learners will pick up on and internalise features of the target language as well as an understanding of the interactive characteristics of Hymes's four facets of communicative ability. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that a lop-sided, overly pragmatic and structurally deviant competence results from such practices,

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[4] While Richards and Rodgers state that the principles of CLT "...address the conditions needed to promote second language learning, rather than the processes of language acquisition" (1986, p. 72), the distinction here is misinformed, or at least superficial, in that the conditions seen as necessary for language learning are valid as such only to the extent that they are supported by findings in SLA research; hence, I would suggest that Richards and Rodgers are begging the question, or re-presenting the problem.

and learners are not adequately encouraged to step beyond what they already know and feel comfortable with.

There are, however, further problems I would suggest with CLT's use of the notion of authenticity, but in order to embark most effectively upon an analysis of these and any ultimate consequences they may have for our assessment of communicative competence frameworks, a preliminary discussion concerning the nature of 'appropriate' language and techniques in second language learning is in order.

5.6 How Appropriate are Authentic Language and Techniques?

The discussion thus far has, I hope, established among other things that proponents of communicative language teaching take the view that appropriate language (i.e. materials) and techniques for the classroom consist in authentic language and behaviour. It has been argued that many theorists and practitioners have chosen to take up this cause, largely on intuitive grounds perhaps, but certainly not as the result of any wisdom in the form of a theory of learning founded upon insights derived from SLA research.

The analysis offered by Widdowson (1994) of methodological appropriacy adds further doubt to the "product=process"-based view of authenticity, and in doing so offers a new dimension to the discussion which has the potential to broaden one's perspective when assessing frameworks of communicative competence. It is to his analysis that we now turn.

5.6.1 What are "Appropriate" Language and "Appropriate" Techniques?: Widdowson's Criteria

Widdowson has suggested two criteria according to which he claims language may be judged appropriate or not. I should like to propose that the first of these criteria does indeed relate primarily to the language (i.e. materials) learners are presented with; the second, on the other hand, could be said to have more to do with classroom techniques in that it concerns the way in which the teacher enables the learner to access those structures which are - explicitly or implicitly - the focus of the lesson.

Widdowson's first criterion of appropriateness pertains to motivation, a key element of CLT as we have seen. It has become virtually axiomatic in education generally in recent years that in order to maximise learning the object(s) of learning must have point for the learner. This is as true in the learning of language as it is in any other field of endeavour. In order to learn language effectively, learners must be motivated to engage with it and to make it their own, something relevant to *their* reality, a reality largely shared by other members of the language learning classroom community - a "culture of classrooms" as Widdowson (ibid. p. 38) calls it. That 'reality' is normally understood by communicativists to mean those uses to which the students expect ultimately to put the language outside the classroom, i.e. the objectives of learning. In this respect it is motivation based not upon actual, immediate needs, but on anticipated, hypothetical needs. There is temporal and thus psychological distance between present activity and the act of authenticating the language in a context of use real to the learner, and it is this distance which prevents one from classifying it as truly authentic and maximally effective for learning. All natural language is *immediately* purposeful. A crucial feature of authentic language - necessarily missing from CLT's 'product-informs-process'-driven interpretation - is the immediacy of the indexical relationship that exists between language and the user's intention. In this respect, authentic language can accurately be described as language which fulfils the purpose for which it was specifically designed.

Moreover, in engaging the learner's own *immediate* reality and locating pedagogy within "the socio-cultural matrix of the learner's own world" (Widdowson 1992, p. 312), truly authentic language makes legitimate in learning any tendency to draw upon the socio-psychological set of one's first language, and nullifies arguments for disengaging that set on grounds of increased receptivity to the target language and regardless of any detrimental consequences to learning resulting from the imposition on the learner of unreal, alien values and notions. The learner, in other words, can legitimately be encouraged to draw upon resident knowledge pertaining to his first language as a resource for negotiating the immediate reality of the second language learning situation.

5.6.1.1 Breen's Concept of Authenticity

This consideration of the immediate reality of the classroom experience leads one to concur with a conclusion drawn by Breen (1985) in his discussion of authenticity and based on the idea that as teachers we should be concerned less about "[authentic] language-using behaviour" and more about "authentic language *learning* behaviour" (1985, p. 65). Breen identifies four types of authenticity which he expresses as four questions facing the language teacher:

(1) What is an authentic text?
(2) For whom is it authentic?
(3) For what authentic purpose?
(4) In which particular social situation?

In an attempt to reconcile these various considerations so as to produce appropriate learning behaviour in the classroom, Breen proposes that:

> Perhaps all other questions of authenticity in language teaching may be resolved if the potential of the classroom is fully exploited ...The day to day challenge of making the most of the classroom offers probably the best resolution of any questions concerning what text is authentic, for whom and for what purposes. Perhaps we should seek ways of bringing to the surface all of the potential resources of the social world in which we work?
>
> (Breen ibid., p. 68)

In other words, question (4) above is the key question, for in maximally exploiting the potential of the classroom "social situation", questions (1), (2) and (3) are automatically resolved. In exploiting the immediate reality of the classroom context, a situation is created similar to that found in first language acquisition, the learning of ESP, and content-based programmes/language learning through immersion, where there exists for the learner no psychological distance between the means of learning and the ends of learning, with the consequence that motivation and thus receptivity is at a peak.

In terms of the alignment of Hymes's 4 conditions of communicative competence discussed above, Breen is in effect suggesting that what ought to be of paramount consideration in the classroom is feasibility, and this is best ensured by disregarding what is appropriate (condition 3) as defined by what goes on outside the classroom (i.e.

"authentic" language in CLT's terms), and instead considering what is appropriate *within* the classroom context.

The inherent potential of the social environment of the classroom to itself form the learner's immediate reality as opposed to an attempted replica of some anticipated reality based upon predicted future employment of the language, is reaffirmed by Widdowson who, in referring to that environment, states:

> It is the domain in which a particular community works together, shares certain ideas and values which define its own reality, engages in a particular kind of communication. There is a culture of class-rooms, just as there is a culture of other domains of human activity. So why should it not have its own conditions of membership? And, of course, its own particular custom-made texts, designed to express its own distinctive identity and to further its own specific purposes? The English of the classroom can be seen as the most obvious example of ESP.
>
> (Widdowson 1994, p. 38)

What emerges, then, from Widdowson's and Breen's analysis is the need for an authenticity based upon the learner's immediate reality and not upon a *projected* reality formed according to what are anticipated applications of the target language. Indeed, talk of "projected" reality disqualifies any simultaneous reference to "authentic", for what is authentic is so only in relation to a particular individual or set of individuals. It is not an objective characteristic of phenomena 'out there in the world' that can exist independently of a human agent or experiencer, but is brought to a situation by the individual according to the way in which he reacts, or engages with that situation. Thus in language learning the learner authenticates language when it relates to his immediate reality, and that will by and large mean when it keys into his goal of mastering the language. In discussing reading, Davies has stated:

> Authenticity ...is a matter of the involvement of the audience. It is not that a text is understood because it is authentic but that it is authentic because it is understood. In teaching, our concern is with simplification, not with authenticity. Everything the learner understands is authentic for him. It is the teacher who simplifies, the learner who authenticates. In the teaching of reading as in all language the fundamental task of the teachers is that of selection or of judging relevance.
>
> (Davies 1984, p. 192)

It is in this process of judging relevance that a good deal of the teacher's responsibility lies, for it requires a gauging of 'authenticity' in response to particular learners' perceptions and dispositions. This is in sharp contrast to the common, less analytical mode of operation according to which learning is assumed to be inducible merely from the presentation of *untuned* language taken from the real world

We have, therefore, a notion of authenticity driven not by an implicit claim - i.e. "product informs process" - about how learning is most effectively achieved, but based on motivational grounds (ironically an area clearly accounted for in CLT principles) and the idea that it is the learner's immediate reality that most effectively engages him in the communication process, and thus indirectly promotes learning.

In recognising the teacher's role as one of simplification, Davies appears somewhat to confirm Widdowson's second criterion according to which *classroom techniques* may be judged appropriate or not; namely the extent to which those techniques produce learning. We have seen that for mainly motivational reasons language which is real for the learner is one factor - if an indirect one - that contributes to increased learning; but it is not by itself sufficient. There need also to be met those conditions which enable the learner to acquire knowledge (i) of the structures of the L2 and, more critically, (ii) of the way in which those structures interact with context of use to produce pragmatic meaning. That is, there needs to be acquired an understanding of the linguistic code of the L2 and an appreciation of its form-function correspondences. In order for this to occur, features of the input need somehow to be made salient for the learner, a notion clearly at odds with Corder's bold claim - identifiable with the strong version of CLT - that:

> Given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the data.
>
> (Corder 1967; in Corder 1981, p. 5, quoted from Howatt 1984)

Now if the conditions of reality we have discussed are to be met, and appropriate materials and techniques brought into alignment, such salience has somehow to be induced, and Widdowson suggests that this may be achieved by making it problematical through the use task-based activities; an idea based on the notion that "if the language has point, I tend not to notice it, if I notice it, it is likely to be because I do not see its point" (1994, p. 37). To "see the point" means to make an indexical connection between the semantic code and its pragmatic function, a

function which needs to bear upon the learner's own reality; but at a more fundamental level, it must also mean an appreciation of the way in which a particular structure, or structures, key into the language system as a whole. By creating "incomplete contexts", problem-solving tasks promote this process by requiring learners to "pay attention to the language in order to complete them" (Widdowson ibid., p. 39).

Both these processes are part of a more general underlying process fundamental, as we have seen, to learning anything; namely the derivation of generalities from actual data. It is this ability to form generalities from particular instances and the potential to apply them productively and receptively which constitutes 'the learning investment'; for once generalities are established, via induction, from particular contexts of use experienced by the learner, they are then primed for employment in a myriad *different* contexts defined according to the culture of the particular L2 speech community, the specific circumstances of the interaction and the schematic knowledge (assumptions, experience etc.) of the participants in communication. How accurately they are employed to accommodate each such context - i.e. how well the various aspects of communicative competence are integrated to produce appropriate language behaviour - depends upon the operation of an ongoing process of refinement alluded to in Chapter 2 (2.6.2 (e)) It is a process which, as the result of no two contexts ever sharing precisely similar characteristics and therefore the parameters of the various competencies being set somewhat differently in relation to one other, can never provide the individual with a perfect, pre-packaged response based on an exact correspondence of parameter settings, and which will therefore always require a degree of improvisation - of strategic competence, a crucial factor in learning as we saw in section 3.3.1.

This call for an ability to improvise implicitly warns against pedagogical practices - not unusual in communicative classrooms - which confine learners to particular patterns of behaviour, and it reinforces Savignon's view of strategic competence as an ever-present requirement regardless of the individual's overall level of linguistic competence. In her (1983) pyramidal representation of the components of communicative competence and their relative developments (see Figure 5), Savignon illustrates this ongoing strategy dependence and in doing so simultaneously emphasises the nature of strategic competence as something beyond the merely remedial resource it is often taken to be.

This picture coincides with that of Canale's (1983) where strategic competence is defined as:

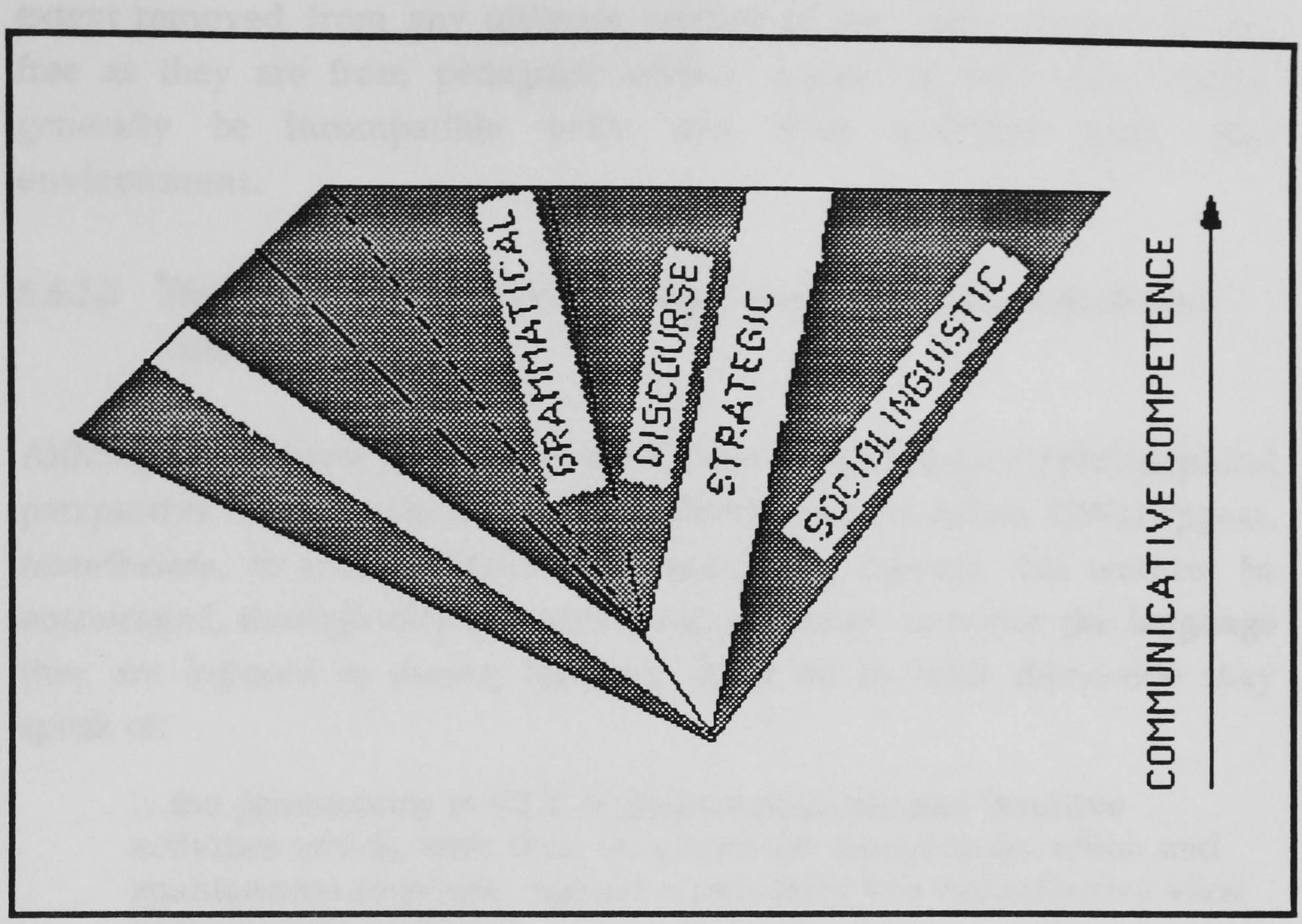
> ...mastery of verbal and non-verbal strategies both (a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to insufficient competence or to performance limitations and (b) *to enhance the rhetorical effect of utterances.*
>
> (Canale 1983, p. 339 - my italics)

While the process of refinement which governs the degree of efficiency and success with which we engage with particular contexts of communication is never complete, even for native speakers, providing a learning environment which is real for the learner and which encourages the formation of generalisations and strategies which empower him to negotiate or adjust to most situations of language use, may well constitute the most practical and effective way of ensuring that learners not only gain insight into the individual areas of competence, but also grasp, as far as possible within the constraints imposed by immanent contextual variability, the relationships existing between them. This experience seems likely to have a more positive impact on the learner's language development than any reference he may make to formal descriptions of language and the interactional patterns of its components. Such descriptions fail to relate naturally to his immediate reality and, arguably, threaten to constrain any natural inclination to *discover*, experientially - if through a restrained teacher control of task-based activities - the workings of the target language. In discussing the futility of an ethnography of communication to attempt an exhaustive and precise description of the relationships between the forms and functions of language - which, I would wish to add, may subsequently inform the syllabus and also somehow take into account potential findings in SLA research - Spolsky states:

> Speech act theory has made quite clear how many different structures can be used for the same act ...Of course one can study the pragmatic value and sociolinguistic probability of choosing each of these structures in different environments ...but the complexity of this task is so immense that we cannot expect ever to come up with a complete list.
>
> (Spolsky 1989, pp. 141-142)

Spolsky here seems implicitly to offer confirmation that there exists an inevitable reliance upon strategic competence right through the

communicative competence continuum, although the degree to which it is called upon can generally be expected to be in an inverse relationship to any increase in overall competence.



Savignon's "Components of Communicative Competence" (1983, p. 46)

Figure 5

The idea that learners need to notice language if they are to learn from it through making generalisations based upon their observations, again has the support of results obtained from the Canadian immersion programmes which have shown that the language of students who are deprived of techniques designed to focus them on the formal properties of the target language tends to fossilise (see 3.3.1).[5] This suggests that so-called "natural" methods are likely short-changing students by discouraging - or at least not encouraging - them to think at least partially in these terms.

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5 This tendency for the language of immersion students to fossilise is evidence for the idea, spoken of in Chapter 3), that even where purposeful tasks have been set, if the language used in carrying out those tasks is unmonitored by the teacher, then short-cut strategies which may involve the avoidance of more sophisticated forms or even the production and establishment of incorrect forms, can dominate learner speech.

The kind of problem-solving tasks Widdowson proposes for getting learners to notice the formal properties of the L2 would, like the language input, require the creation of a contrived learning environment to some extent removed from any ultimate context of use. Such contexts of use, free as they are from pedagogic artifice, would by their very nature generally be incompatible with, and thus excluded from, that environment.

5.6.1.2 The Need for Reflection in Language Learning: Tarvin and Al-Arishi's View

Although they come at the issue more from a psychological/philosophical perspective than an educational one, Tarvin and Al-Arishi (1991) appear, nonetheless, to share Widdowson's underlying concern that learners be encouraged, through carefully structured activities, to notice the language they are exposed to during learning. Early on in their discussion they speak of:

> ...the prominence in CLT of phenomenalistic and intuitive activities which, with their emphases on conspicuous action and spontaneous response, suggest a proclivity to a nonreflective view of language acquisition.
>
> (Tarvin and Al-Arishi 1991, p. 9)

The authors go on to quote Underhill who similarly writes that in many classes:

> ...conspicuous action tends to be more highly valued than the need of all participants to pause unilaterally and stand back from, and reflect on, what they are doing.
>
> (Underhill 1989, p. 253).

Tarvin and Al-Arishi articulate this characteristic of CLT classrooms more specifically in terms of the following three activity types:

1. Phenomenalistically-based activities which suggest that sensa are crucial to language acquisition.
2. Immediate-response activities which measure if subconscious, automatic, intuitive acquisition has occurred.
3. Interactional activities which stress that language is acquired through an interpersonal negotiation, not through

> intrapersonal negotiation where the mind reflectively "turns inward upon itself".
>
> (Tarvin & Al-Arishi ibid., p. 23)

Such activities are (no doubt correctly) seen as an attempt to correct certain deficiencies of audiolingualism, although - very much in the same spirit as Widdowson - Tarvin and Al-Arishi take a moderate view of things and see reflection-promoting activities as complementary to phenomenalistic, intuitive, interactional activities rather than in opposition to them. The benefits derived from the latter activity types combine with those generated by the kind of task-oriented, process-oriented and synthesis-oriented activities which, they suggest, develop critical thinking and metacognitive learning strategies, encourage an individualising of language acquisition, and instil motivation and self-esteem (1991, p. 24).

In essence, then, whilst Tarvin and Al-Arishi recognise the value of phenomenally and intuitively oriented activities, nevertheless they and Underhill appear, implicitly, to be cautioning against the kind of product-informs-process view of language teaching spoken of above and so closely associated with the authenticity principle. Activities which concentrate on the *here and now*, they argue, involve fewer opportunities for reflection; and we have established that without such reflection learning cannot take place.

5.6.2 Richards and Rodgers' Articulation of a 'Theory of Learning' in CLT

Finally, and in conclusion to this section, it is worth making brief mention of the three principles Richards and Rodgers (1986) identify as implicit in CLT and the only evidence of an underlying theory of learning. These are:

- *The Communication Principle* - Activities that involve real communication promote learning.
- *The Task Principle* - Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.
- *The Meaningfulness Principle* - Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

While these three principles do undoubtedly feature in naturalistic communication and their realisation may indeed promote the learning

process, it must be said that this is not in itself justification for proposing an authenticity principle which demonstrates the belief that what features in the classroom must replicate what features in the target language community. Each of these principles can remain equally valid in classrooms which reject an imported or alien authenticity and which operate according to Widdowson's and Breen's idea that the only truly and possibly authentic classroom is one which features language and behaviour that the learner recognises as related to his own immediate reality and not some 'projected' reality that he is unable to ratify and thus learn from.

5.7 Some Further Thoughts on Authenticity

It was suggested above (section 5.3.2) that the kinds of activities typically found in communicative classrooms and frequently referred to as "authentic" are in fact nothing of the sort and clearly do *not* replicate the kinds of behaviour found outside the classroom. Where they are *in part* 'authentic' is in the learner response they promote; a response in which there is a focus on message or pragmatic meaning rather than the linguistic code. However, if the learner does indeed need to notice the language in order to learn from it, as Widdowson suggests, then clearly such a response is undesirable unless there is somehow an 'incidental' attention to form - or some aspect of it - such as is prompted by the kinds of carefully constructed tasks he proposes. This process of ensuring salience and therefore a degree of form focus works as an investment in the sense that once the learner has noticed the language and formed generalisations from it, he will have moved a step further toward being able to engage with pragmatic meaning in future communication and thus truly authenticating the situation in which that communication takes place.

By the same token, communicative activities that take place *outside* the classroom - what Stern terms "field experiences" (1992, p. 183) - are likewise inadequate in failing to ensure that the learner is noticing the language in a way that promotes the formation of generalisations from it which he can then apply in other contexts of communication. Moreover. many of the classroom activities commonly found in 'communicative' textbooks and labelled as "communicative" are in reality little more than

conversational frameworks that learners simply memorise, substituting certain elements in the framework. There are clear echoes here of the very controlled audiolingual classroom practices, and the only (unjustifiable) reason for labelling them "communicative" is presumably the fact that there exists a degree of learner-centredness and autonomy - be it excruciatingly small.

As far as 'authentic' *language* is concerned there are other difficulties. Language which is brought into the classroom as a means of learning is immediately inauthentic in that people are interacting with the text in an unnatural manner. That is, texts taken *out of* the L2 community and used in communicative classrooms were not produced as texts to help students learn language. Learners know this and are consequently unable to authenticate the language of those texts. They inevitably view them as aids to learning, and while they may indeed be precisely that in the sense that they are motivating to a degree and engage the learner's interest, they are nevertheless not necessarily appropriate in terms of Widdowson's second criterion, that of triggering learning. In order for *that* to happen, and in the absence of any evidence to suggest that learning happens merely by exposure to the genuine article, there needs to be a degree of teacher control or manipulation. Thus, in essence, you cannot transfer language from the context in which it occurs naturally to the classroom context without necessarily stripping it of its authenticity in the process.

The idea that learners can infer communicative competence through exposure to authentic language is also faced with a difficulty inherent in authentic language itself; namely its degenerate form. Alluding to Chomsky's 'poverty of the stimulus' argument, Widdowson describes the phenomenon as follows:

> the authentic language of recorded use is a record of communicative performance, warts and all, incomplete, elliptical, pragmatically expedient, dependent on context, and unreliable as evidence of communicative competence. How then are learners to acquire communicative competence from it?
>
> (Widdowson 1992, p. 309)

Again, if the solution is to alter, or doctor real samples of actual language use and thereby create *semi-authentic* language, then product-based authenticity, where language is imported directly from the L2 community into the classroom, is no longer a reality (regardless of the question as to whether it can subsequently be authenticated by the learner). Instead,

learners are in effect presented with a distortion or shadow of the original. But not only are they faced with 'degenerate' data in the sense of it being uninformative, they are also frequently faced with deviant data, for all too often the kinds of interactive activities seen as promoting communicative competence in learners only ensure that they get exposure to the language of other learners, and that input will unquestionably consist of unacceptable deviations from the norm. While error is inevitable in learning, indeed necessary (as the basic principles of CLT tacitly acknowledge), the reality is that in activities of this kind, teachers fail very often to monitor the kind of language and short-cut strategies being used. Thus authentic language and the so-called authentic activities of CLT may leave learners facing a poverty as well as a deviance of stimulus.

Finally, given that the learning process ought to invest learners with the power of generalisation and the ability to adapt their understanding of language to unfamiliar contexts of use, contexts where dialect, genre and register require linguistic and paralinguistic adjustments, questions inevitably arise as to what language constitutes the "authentic language" for learning. Clearly, with the exception of the ESP situation, there are problems knowing precisely what contexts learners are ultimately going to be faced with; and even if accurate predictions could be made in this regard, there would still remain the difficulty of different learners in the same class anticipating themselves operating within different environments, as well as the fact, mentioned above, that merely importing the language of the goal of learning into the classroom does not mean the learner can authenticate it and thus engage with it in the way he needs to if he is to learn from it.

5.8 Summary: Foundations for a New Perspective on CLT

It was proposed in Chapter 3 that authenticity in language learning is not necessary for the achievement of communicative competence. The results of discussions in the present chapter would tend to confirm that proposition, at least in terms of the product-oriented way in which proponents of the communicative approach have chosen to define "authenticity"; a definition which it necessarily has to promote if it is to link the means of learning to the ends of learning and thus fulfil what, at the start of this chapter, was established as a precondition to investing

communicative competence frameworks with a degree of utility. It would appear difficult to support claims for the necessity of the product-based authenticity of CLT either at the level of syllabus design, or methodology.

If, however, one views authenticity not in terms of the product or goals of learning - which, it has been argued, by their very nature cannot be truly authenticated by the learner - but instead in terms of the immediate learning environment where the learner truly engages with and authenticates the language while, within that contextual framework, being legitimately sensitised to the formal properties of the L2 through the artifice of a discriminating and competent teacher, then there is no question of importing a reality into the classroom other than that which relates to the learner's own world. As a result, instead of what amounts to a contrived *bringing together* of the means and ends of learning through the notion of 'authenticity', the two realms essentially operate quite naturally as one.

As CLT is currently interpreted, then, communicative competence frameworks are of questionable utility, for they become the casualty of a notion of authenticity that is misinformed - or more accurately *un*informed by a psycholinguistically-based, research-driven theory of how we learn - and most effectively learn - foreign languages. And any attempt to fall back on psychological constructs, such as motivation, in order to rescue this interpretation can be countered by reference to the distant and thus essentially inauthentic nature of the product-informed notion of authenticity, and the consequent reduction in natural learning. Better an authenticity that directly feeds into the learning process by stimulating natural learning processes than a claimed 'authenticity' which does little more than stimulate the *desire* to learn. Important though this desire may be, it does not necessarily implicate methodological authenticity; indeed, some of the distinctly inauthentic tasks to which Widdowson makes reference may be far more motivating than those deemed 'wholly authentic' and based upon learning objectives. Moreover, they may also, as we have seen, serve equally well as promoters of learner strategy development, and there is nothing to suggest that learners cannot operate equally well on language presented in inauthentic, contrived learning contexts, and deduce the language from these. This is not to say that product-based 'authentic' methodology cannot usefully serve in a supplementary capacity. It can, but its role is neither a necessary nor a sufficient one.

Given that we do not as yet have anything like a clear understanding of how foreign languages are most effectively learnt or the psycholinguistic processes that operate in the effort to learn any language (first of second), it does not seem unreasonable to refer to what is the established wisdom in education theory in general - and in particular the centrality of motivation and the importance of observing, analysing and generalising from observed data - and mould pedagogical practice around these considerations.

Thus, in attempting to assess the utility of frameworks of communicative competence, we have, it would seem, unearthed fundamental conceptual problems with CLT, and specifically with its very central (one might even say critical) notion of authenticity. An analysis of these problems enables one to forge a new perspective on the approach which, as Chapter 6 endeavours to show, offers a series of significant advantages not least of which is the resolution of a number of those contradictions cited in Chapter 2.

As for frameworks of communicative competence themselves, I would, in conclusion, suggest their utility is twofold:

Firstly, rather than providing parameters for a description of language use that can then be mysteriously translated into principles (such as that of authenticity) which guide classroom practices, they serve instead to increase the teacher's consciousness about the kinds of factors that need to feature somewhere in the learner's language development. How and when those factors are best brought into harmony by the learner so as to create the potential for appropriate and attested language use is a question which the theoretically informed teacher who is sensitive to the particular contextual conditions in which he is working will need to address according to those conditions. Given the two dimensions of appropriacy outlined above, that means, for example, enabling the learner to access and internalise the different socio-cultural realities behind the target language whilst remaining in tune - and thus fully engaged - with the present reality of the foreign language classroom. If some wish to argue that such a proposal is idealistic, then the teaching of socio-cultural aspects of the L2 culture can be treated on the sidelines or even dismissed on the basis that these are what Widdowson has termed "niceties" that can undergo the necessary tuning according to the social context in which the learner later finds himself. Meantime the classroom is geared toward providing the learner with the kind of linguistic investment and strategy

development he needs in order to be able to make those kinds of adjustments later on.

If this consciousness-raising role can be described as proactive or anticipatory, then the second role played by frameworks of communicative competence is retroactive. If one holds the view that communicative competence is the goal of language learning irrespective of whether or not in order to achieve that goal one chooses to adopt the principles and practices of CLT - for many the default pedagogy of communicative competence theory - then frameworks of communicative competence have always had what I shall term *referential utility*. That is, they provide an objective criterion against which to evaluate the efficacy or otherwise of methods and approaches to foreign language teaching. Indeed, models such as Canale and Swain's and Bachman's were, it was noted in Chapter 3, devised as prerequisites to the construction of tests designed to assess communicative language ability in foreign language students. While the construction of valid tests of communicative ability poses problems of its own, the observance or otherwise of conventions relating, for example, to Hymes's parameters of possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and attestedness are not difficult to recognise in learner performance; indeed all of us, whether inside or outside the profession, frequently make judgements along these lines usually with remarkable speed, if not in precisely similar terms. The ability to do so is evidence of our awareness of those linguistic conventions that define community membership and cohesion.

Chapter 6

A Revised View of Authenticity: The Theoretical Implications for Communicative Language Teaching

6.1 The Potential for a Resolution of Inconsistencies

If one dispenses with the notion of authenticity in its common guise, namely as the product of importing into the classroom characteristics (i.e. language and behaviour) of the target language community directly from that community without subjecting it to any kind of pedagogically motivated editing process or manipulation for learning purposes, then those conflicts (identified in 3.1) existing between certain principles of CLT would appear to be reconcilable.

(i) *Authenticity Vs. Learner Autonomy/Learner-Centredness*:
Once 'authenticity' is seen to apply legitimately to devised classroom activities on the basis that (i) the classroom is a community unto itself and as such operates much like any other rule-governed (target) language community and (ii) the classroom is immediately purposeful and engages the learner's own immediate reality, then the principles of authenticity and learner autonomy cease to be at odds with one another. Authenticity is no longer definable as native speaker behaviour in communication, for such behaviour, although the ultimate goal of learning, does *not* key in with the learner's own *immediate* reality as we have established it needs to do. This means that the learner can make the target language his own (as the principle of learner autonomy requires) while the classroom simultaneously provides a legitimate *authentic* environment in which to do so. Moreover, while in making the language his own the learner may produce deviant linguistic behaviour that would be in conflict with the kind of imposed authenticity I propose abandoning, such behaviour does not contravene these suggested new parameters of 'authenticity'; quite the contrary, it becomes an integral part of authentic behaviour in the foreign language classroom community.

(ii) *Authenticity Vs. Affect -Related Principles of CLT*:

Defining authenticity according to the above two conditions ((i) and (ii)) allows for a reconciliation of what was earlier identified as an inconsistency between the principle of 'imported' authenticity, which in a sense artificially and unreasonably forces the learner to behave as would a native speaker, and those other principles of CLT that reflect a concern with the psychological disposition of the learner; i.e. the principles of (a) minimal error correction, (b) learner-centredness/autonomy, (c) sequencing according to what learners see as relevant to them, and (d) comprehensible pronunciation. Most obviously, principles (b) and (c) neatly coincide with the idea that the object of learning must key into the learner's own reality (condition (ii)); a reality defined not *merely* in terms of his immediate goal of engaging with and learning as best he can from the activities and input of the language classroom, but also in terms of the socio-cultural baggage or schematic knowledge derived from his first language. It is the operation of these processes that truly enables the learner to authenticate the target language he is presented with. And as the degree to which he is able to 'tune into' the socio-cultural patterns - and indeed structural idiosyncrasies - of the target language community (in the broadest sense) increases, so does the volume and range of target language/behaviour that is authentic for him. In this sense one might say that authenticity is elusive, a slippery customer, because for each individual what he is or is not able to authenticate of the target language is continually changing in response to and in conjunction with his increase in overall proficiency which in turn develops as a result of increased exposure to the language. In this respect, what is authentic for a native speaker is also constantly in flux, for what he can and cannot authenticate likewise alters as his knowledge of different discourse domains and the conventions of different discourse communities (at the micro-level) sharing what is essentially a common language (at the macro-level) expands - or at least adjusts - according to which communities he wishes to gain entry or has most exposure to.

As the foreign language learner's competence in the target language develops, the language and socio-cultural/behavioural norms of the L2 thus become increasingly authentic. He is gradually weaned off a reliance upon his first language and the socio-cultural norms associated with it. In this sense although what is able to be authenticated by the learner in the *L2* alters as overall competence increases, nevertheless everything that

happens in the classroom is, at every stage of the learning process, authentic for him, even if this initially involves drawing heavily upon knowledge (grammatical and otherwise) of his first language. The point is that in this scenario the learning environment always remains authentic for the learner and as such offers the conditions most appropriate and conducive to learning (re. section 5.6). The kinds of conditions CLT proposes under the rubric of "authenticity" in effect ignore such learner factors by representing a purist approach that introduces into the classroom language and behaviour unsullied by teacher intervention but which can never be truly authenticated by the learner. It constrains pedagogic artifice and thus stunts the potential for learning according to more general, well-established principles of learning. The fact is that while the learner may indeed need eventually to face up to the complete reality of the L2, this is not justification for assuming, in the absence of empirical support, that he will learn best if faced cold with that reality in the classroom and in contravention of those widely acknowledged principles of learning.

Clearly also, once one accepts on its own terms the authenticity of the classroom language learning community, one can also accept as a part of the very nature of that community the kinds of learner errors that a minimalist policy toward error correction ((a) above) is inevitably going to entail. Unless the language teacher subscribes to a rigorously structured and tightly controlled classroom dynamic where opportunities to engage in the kind of negotiation of meaning widely seen as necessary to the development of a full communicative competence are absent, then errors must inevitably characterise the learning process.

So too with comprehensible pronunciation (principle (d)). As we have established in 3.3.1, the acquisition of native-like pronunciation in the L2 is necessarily a gradual process, rarely completed, and therefore a demand for perfect (native-like) pronunciation is unrealistic. Deviance from a target norm (however one chooses to define this) is unavoidable and can only become acceptable, therefore, within a frame of reference which sees it as authentic behaviour; and that means the foreign language classroom. That is *not* to say that the classroom is artificially defined as authentic simply in order to take the characteristics of L2 pronunciation acquisition into account; as we have seen, it has a natural right to be regarded as authentic in and of itself, regardless.

(iii) *Authenticity Vs. Teacher as Counsellor/Resource Person*:
The very existence of a counsellor-resource person in the foreign language classroom presupposes, quite reasonably, the possibility of error or deviance from the established targets of learning. Error we know is an inevitable feature of the classroom, part of what makes it a community of its own with a particular code of conduct or set of community practices. If one accepts error on this basis, therefore, one may also accept the existence of an individual/individuals whose role it is to monitor, guide and correct (implicitly or explicitly) learners' language, for this too is a part of the learning environment. Whether communicative or solely grammatical competence is the goal of learning, it is not enough, so the evidence suggests (see 3.3.1), for learners merely to engage in communication without somehow ensuring, through teacher intervention, that their attention is drawn to the formal characteristics of the language in accordance with the conditions of learning proposed in section 5.6.1.

(iv) *Subordination of Form to Meaning Vs. Linguistic Variation*:
It was suggested in Chapter 3 that while there needs to be some focus on meaning in language learning, there is no reason to believe that form ought necessarily to play a subordinate role. The fact that the form-over-meaning principle adorns the communicative crown at all is once again evidence of the pervasiveness of the authenticity principle. The reasoning appears to be simply that as in real communication outside the classroom, so too with communication inside the classroom; if we concern ourselves with meaning in our everyday use of language, then the realisation of that concern *in* the classroom is what will most efficaciously produce learning in our students and ensure that they become communicatively competent in the target language.

Once a focus on form is legitimised as an integral part of the language learning process, however, then the kind of linguistic variation that was established in 3.3.1 as a necessary facet of learners' strategic competence and which implies a focus on form, simultaneously becomes legitimate and, according to the conditions of appropriacy outlined earlier, an authentic part of the language learning environment. If learners are deprived of the opportunity to develop and access alternative means of expression because it involves a focus on form and is disruptive to fluency, then this introduces an *inauthentic* element into the 'language learning community' because it prevents the operation of a process that it is natural for the individual to engage in within the context of that

community. It is also worth noting that if a teacher chooses to flout such community conventions, then clearly fluency and any kind of meaning focus is inevitably going to be disrupted anyway. Learners cannot be expected to focus on meaning *and* remain fluent. If the two could consistently be brought into alignment by learners in the classroom, then they would by definition become inauthentic within that context, for the need to learn (an inherent and defining characteristic of the language learning community and thus a necessary condition of membership) would no longer exist.

In addition to establishing the conditions for a reconciliation of these apparent inconsistencies, dispensing with the need to mould ideas according to the quite severe constraints imposed by the principle of imported authenticity also has potentially highly significant repercussions for a number of other prominent and controversial issues central to the language teaching debate in recent years and frequently made reference to in the literature. It is to an exploration of these that our discussion will now turn.

6.2 Legitimising the Use of Metalanguage and a "Focus on Form"

It was suggested in Chapter 2 that Communicative Language Teaching was originally intended as a way to critical enquiry. It represented a desire to establish an investigative framework via which theorists and pedagogues could review the state of the art and think anew about language teaching practices from a perspective informed by various theoretical influences which were harnessed (initially and most influentially by Hymes, as we have seen) and formalised in a theory of communicative competence.

These intentions were in large part misunderstood with the result that CLT came to be seen as a blueprint, a fresh beginning, and a rejection of much of what had preceded it in pedagogy. This is no more clearly demonstrated than in the attitude toward grammar that emerged in its wake; indeed in theory, if not always in practice, CLT became virtually synonymous with a rejection of grammar - a disposition I have suggested was unwarranted and untenable (re. 3.3.1ii & Chapter 5). In recent years the balance appears to have swung back the other way somewhat as a result of a growing ethos of moderation in the field of language teaching, a

reaction, in part, to the lack of critical analysis, vision or direction indicated by tendencies toward extremism and implicit in clichés of the "bandwagons" variety spoken of earlier.

I have proposed that the minimalist view of grammar spoken of came about as a result of the dubious and largely empirically unfounded translation of theoretical insights into an intuitively attractive set of learning principles guiding classroom behaviour and reflecting the idea of authenticity as necessarily pivotal to the learning process. That is, grammar became marginalised because it was seen as having little or no place in a teaching-learning process which it was felt ought to reflect the conditions of language use; conditions in which a meaning rather than form focus predominates. Once the validity of authenticity as a basis for the translation of theoretical into pedagogical principles is undermined, however, on the basis of its unachievability and inappropriacy, then in principle at least a fundamental obstacle to the reintroduction of grammar disappears.

However, whilst the authenticity principle may have been the medium which allowed communicativists to misinterpret and misapply communicative competence theory, a rejection of that principle as it is generally understood does not in itself constitute a sound argument *for* the reintroduction of grammar into teaching/learning. Such an argument, however, can be found at the heart of the idea expressed in Chapter 5 that the learner needs to somehow notice and reflect on the language if he is to learn from it, and this requires the kind of pedagogical intervention on the part of the teacher/textbook designer that is antithetical to ideas of naturalistic learning. In order to understand *why* the learner needs to notice language and thereby learn from it, it is helpful to invoke a distinction drawn by Widdowson (1990) between *systemic* and *schematic* knowledge.

6.2.1 Pooling Resources: Systemic and Schematic Knowledge

Widdowson suggests that our ability to understand language and negotiate meaning is the product of our ability to access two types of knowledge, systemic and schematic. Systemic knowledge refers to knowledge (lexical, syntactic etc.) of the linguistic system, and schematic to "...the knowledge which is acquired as a condition of entry into a particular culture or sub-culture ...a necessary source of reference in use whereby linguistic symbols

are converted into indices in the process of interpretation" (1990, pp. 102-103). Systemic knowledge might be termed grammatical knowledge, while schematic is world knowledge as it relates to particular contexts of communication. Operationally these two knowledge types stand in inverse relation to one another; the more one is invoked, the less so is the other. In the case of the native speaker who is normally focused on meaning (re. Littlewood, section 3.2.1) schematic knowledge is the dominant partner, unless the individual is operating within a discourse domain with which he is very unfamiliar. Assuming he *is* familiar with the domain, he will have little need for recourse to a form focus, for his schematic map will be sufficiently (though never entirely) congruous with that of his interlocutor to make this unnecessary.

In the case of the language learner, however, his schematic knowledge will in general be less congruous than that of his native speaker counterpart with the result that he will need to rely more heavily on his systemic knowledge to 'bridge the communication gap' and successfully negotiate meaning. If he fails to have adequate access to that resource, communication is almost inevitably going to be impaired. As his schematic knowledge adjusts and indeed broadens in response to an increase in contact with the target language culture/community, so his reliance upon his systemic knowledge of the L2 as well as his systemic and schematic knowledge of his L1 will decrease, roughly proportionally; they will naturally become less salient to the learner as their importance for him wanes. This is, in fact, part of the process of increasing authentication of the target language spoken of above (6.1 ii).

The fact is that the notion of systemic knowledge as a resource in situations where schematic knowledge is inadequate to establish meaning, is a particularly crucial one for the language learner if he is to be able to successfully negotiate meaning and thereby ultimately derive insights into form-function relationships and the pragmatics of language use - what Widdowson refers to as "learning how grammar functions in the achievement of meaning" (1990, p. 97). Only when he has learnt this sufficiently will he be able to focus on meaning in communication; and only then will schematic knowledge override systemic which, from that point onwards, generally operates 'in the background'. And indeed, as we have seen, the need to call upon systemic knowledge is not simply characteristic of the language learner, but also the native speaker; it is, one might say, part of our continually developing strategic competence, and

faced with new discourse domains, contexts in which registerial appropriacy/formal correctness (or otherwise) is particularly important, situations in which there arise problems in transmission (noise, unclarity of expression etc.), we frequently exploit its benefits as an invaluable communicative resource. Therefore, regardless of its utility in the learning process, the learner *needs* to develop systemic knowledge as a resource simply because even if he ultimately acquires native-like fluency in the L2, he will from time to time continue to face sub-cultures with which he is more or less unfamiliar.

A way of helping ensure that the learner develops and has access to this systemic resource while also deriving insights into the pragmatics of language use and operating with language not as a formal system but a communicative resource, is to involve him in the kind of purposeful tasks mentioned in 5.6.1.1; i.e. tasks designed to simultaneously make him (a) focus indirectly on forms made salient by pedagogic artifice and (b) purposefully engage with the language. Such tasks serve to bring form and function into alignment 'naturally', in much the same way as they are received in first language acquisition, and without subscribing to a view which sees such artifice as unacceptable largely as a result of a misplaced allegiance to the principle of authenticity. This kind of task-based approach need not preclude an *explicit* focus on form and the use of metalanguage which, if controlled, can serve in a complementary capacity either by pre-sensitising learners to particular features of the language that arise naturally within the task itself and thus making those features more salient, or by acting as a post-task reinforcement activity or check.

6.2.1.1 The Need for Systemic Knowledge as Justification for a Writing Focus in the Foreign Language Classroom

Few would deny that the communicative approach to language teaching has generally been interpreted as relating to oral-aural communication rather than written communication. This is doubtless largely due to the fact that CLT was widely seen by language teachers as a response to the all too commonplace phenomenon of language learners completing programmes of study equipped with a systemic knowledge of the L2 that would embarrass the native speaker, yet unable to access and correctly apply that knowledge in contexts of real communication (re. section 4.4.1). Thus notions and functions, for example, were for the most part associated

with an ability to *speak* and *listen* effectively and appropriately in target language contexts. Likewise with speech acts - very much the theoretical motivation for Wilkins' categories.

This parochial interpretation of CLT was reinforced by the reaction against grammar that accompanied the emergence of the approach and the influence of which was felt in two ways: Firstly, because there was clearly a need to concentrate on developing learners' oral-aural proficiency, there was somewhat of a shift away from literacy skills. Secondly, writing was closely associated with grammatical knowledge and its development; a quite natural association given the pre-eminence of grammar-translation techniques over the preceding decades.

If the learner is to build up his systemic knowledge of the L2 as a resource as we have established he needs to do, writing is one medium through which he is inevitably going to focus on form, but, crucially, as an incidental by-product of being engaged in what the teacher needs to ensure is a purposeful activity. This focus on form will among other things involve the testing of hypotheses about how the language works as well as a consideration of the relationship between forms and the functions they serve; between forms and their context of use. If the teacher so wishes, he may bring certain formal aspects of the language to the learner's attention prior to the writing activity, so long as the learner is presented with the opportunity to key such instruction into the pragmatic use to which he is putting the language; that is, he needs to see it as a necessary means to an end; an end which goes beyond the mere reality of the form itself.

6.3 Taking Stock

Thus far two important steps have been taken in our discussion. Firstly, the need for an imported authenticity in the classroom has been seriously called into question thereby making way for a resolution of those inconsistencies which would appear to undermine the communicativist cause. Secondly the relationship between systemic and schematic knowledge proposed by Widdowson and alluded to above has provided a positive rationale for the *inclusion* of grammar in the FLT classroom - and indeed for embracing writing activity as a potentially valuable (though hitherto neglected) tool for the communicativist's kit bag. Together, these

two steps create conditions that in turn demand a change in attitude toward three areas of concern in particular:

- The role of the learner's first language.
- The role of the learner's L1 culture.
- The role of the non-native foreign language teacher.

6.4 The Role of the Learner's First Language

6.4.1 The Learner's L1 as a Resource

Just as second language systemic knowledge is to be seen as a valuable resource for the learner, likewise with the learner's systemic knowledge of his first language. Once the status of imported authenticity is relegated, the first language can be seen as a means of accessing the schematic world of the native language user when the learner's own schema is incongruent enough to deny him access to shared meaning (the ultimate goal of learning) and his L2 systemic knowledge is such that he is unable to negotiate that meaning. There seems no reason for denying the learner access to his first language if such access means deriving insights into form-function relationships and, ultimately, a procedural grasp of the 'schematic conditions of membership' of the target language community. Moreover, the legitimacy of such access would be entirely consistent with the principle of learner autonomy and discovery established in section 3.3.1 as a necessary feature of CLT given its goal of communicative competence. The only reason for caution would be the possibility of an over-reliance upon the L1 which could interfere with the development of L2 systemic knowledge and an appreciation of the pragmatic functions it serves. Careful monitoring and the kind of purposeful tasks spoken of in Chapter 5 would to some extent be necessary to help counter any such tendency.

6.4.2 A Case for Reinstating Grammar-Translation

Accepting a grammar focus as a legitimate feature of an authentic language learning environment and a useful resource that assists the learner in negotiating meaning and thus gaining insight into the

pragmatic realisation of the target language system might, arguably, be seen as lending ratification to the limited use of grammar-translation exercises. By their very nature such exercises inevitably encourage the learner to notice similarities - and indeed differences - between his L1 and the L2, and in doing so enable him to build up a more accurate picture of the way in which the target language grammar operates, thus helping ensure access to it as a resource.

6.4.3 Reassessing the Role of Contrastive Analysis

In recognising the potential value of grammar-translation on the basis that the process of comparison can provoke learning which then acts as a linguistic resource, one implicitly reaffirms a role in language teaching-learning for contrastive analysis which, like grammar, fell victim to the extremism and blinkeredness that accompanied the growth of the communicative movement. Not only will contrastive analysis operate during the completion of grammar-translation exercises (and inevitably during efforts to negotiate meaning) but, within the framework proposed here, it can function as a predictive tool which the teacher can utilise for reinforcement purposes or to pre-sensitise learners in the fashion suggested above (6.2.1).

6.5 The Role of the Learner's Culture

I have suggested in section 5.6.1.1 that the learner needs to be involved in tasks which simultaneously encourage him to (a) focus indirectly on forms made salient by pedagogic artifice and (b) purposefully engage with the language if he is to develop and have access to the systemic resource spoken of above, while also deriving insights into the pragmatics of language use and operating with language not as a formal system but a communicative resource. Now, if he is to purposefully engage with the language and thus learn from it, this requires that he be presented with content that is meaningful and naturally stimulating to him; content which relates to his own reality, his own schema of things. In many cases content which is culturally authentic (i.e. which encodes elements of the target language culture) will by its very nature be alien to that schema and therefore less effective as a means of developing L2 systemic knowledge as

a resource through which he can then broaden his schematic knowledge such that his pragmatic use of the language is enhanced. In this respect, culturally loaded content pertaining to the L2 cannot be truly authenticated by the learner in the terms discussed in Chapter 5, although it *may* reflect the ends of learning. And while it is clear that systemic knowledge can be developed by focusing the learner's attention on areas of interest to him which are 'culturally neutral', it nevertheless seems reasonable also to allow him access to cultural knowledge pertaining to his first language if this helps him work more fluently with the target language and negotiate the immediate reality of the language learning situation. Such access would, as suggested above (6.2.1), be more important in the earlier stages of learning when his knowledge of the L2 culture is still relatively limited.

6.6 The Role of the Non-Native Speaker Teacher

Like grammar, the non-native speaker was to some extent a casualty of the over-emphasis placed on an authentic learning environment by the communicative movement. It is hardly coincidental that at a time when the idea of exposure to natural language was very much in fashion, schools, colleges and universities were displaying a desire to employ native-speakers of those languages they sought to teach. In certain cases unqualified native speakers with little or no knowledge and experience of language teaching were given priority over non-native speakers more adept in terms of their systemic knowledge of the language and better versed in the theory and practice of language teaching. In effect, being a native speaker of a language was all too frequently taken to be qualification enough to teach that language.

Neither, perhaps, is it coincidental that as the role of grammar is being reassessed and its centrality to the language teaching-learning process increasingly re-acknowledged, there is accompanying this shift of perspective a change in perceptions about the role of the non-native speaker teacher. That is, one wonders whether the increased profile the non-native speaker teacher is currently undergoing is linked, among other things, to the re-emergence of grammar in language teaching, for it is frequently observed that in terms of the articulation of grammatical rules, the non-native speaker is often noticeably better informed than the native

speaker who tends to rely more upon intuition in his formulation of those rules.

It is fair to assume also that in situations where the teacher is of the same ethnic background as the learners, he will be able to evaluate more easily language content or materials in terms of their potential to stimulate learner interest and thus engagement with the language, and ultimately learning. The teacher's schematic knowledge will in general be far more likely to match that of the learner and thus he will in principle be better able to (i) gauge materials in terms of their "appropriacy" vis à vis Widdowson's two conditions outlined in Chapter 5, and (ii) ensure that the transition from a dependence on L1 systemic and schematic knowledge to fluent operation in the L2 is a smooth one.

It might also be argued that even in the case of teachers who are non-native speakers but *not* of the same ethnic background as the learners there is a greater likelihood that they also will be more sensitive to the need to take learners' own interests and socio-cultural dispositions into account rather than assuming shared values.

It would seem, therefore, that the non-native teacher has two highly significant strengths. Not only will he frequently be in a position to convey to the learner systemic knowledge - typically as the result of having had to grapple with and comprehend it himself during his own experience of learning the language - but in addition, through increased sensitivity, he may well be better set up than his native speaker counterpart to ensure that learners are presented with material appropriate to their particular reality and thus "authentic" according to those conditions described in 5.6.1. One might also suppose that coming to the classroom guaranteed equipped with the experience of having learnt a foreign language, the non-native teacher is better able to empathise with the learners' predicament and adjust his pedagogy more suitably accordingly.

6.7 Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter 1, mention was briefly made of some of the forces that make themselves felt in resisting and restricting changes of paradigm; forces which Planck and Kuhn suggest are often overcome only as the result of an influx of new and younger blood into the field concerned; individuals

with scant allegiance to the current paradigm and not restrained by any natural inclination toward conservatism.

It is reasonable to presume that similar resistant forces operate *within* as well as 'between' established paradigms - that is intra-paradigmatically as well as inter-paradigmatically - in effect blocking or countering attempts to make any significant alterations to the make-up or characteristics of those paradigms. Indeed, I would wish to claim that the current study bears witness to the existence of such forces by attempting to illustrate the lack of a sufficiently critical, inquisitorial attitude toward ideas within the field of applied linguistics; a deficiency that has acted as a buffer, promoting parochialism, and stifling any momentum toward open-mindedness and change for the better.

What Chapters 3-6 in particular have sought to illustrate is the potential implicational significance of an open-minded examination of well established principles, operating specifically within the communicative paradigm of language teaching. There is strong evidence to suggest that while the paradigm boasts a sound, well-informed and unambiguous theoretical basis (level 1 of the analytical framework outlined in chapter 2), the nature of its pedagogical realisation and unquestioning acceptance by the those engaged at various levels of the language teaching profession indicates a lack of integrity not in keeping with fundamental precepts of the *scientific method*. The motivation for intentionally or unintentionally abandoning those precepts likely arose in part from the need, felt intensely by many, to distance language teaching from the more unpalatable aspects of previous approaches and methods. Added to this was the allurement of what in many cases were intuitively attractive statements of 'effective' pedagogical procedure/practice.

Thus attitudes toward a number of ideas central to CLT were, one suspects, in many cases more the result of an emotional response than any form of rational analysis and empirical investigation. Finally, and at the risk of appearing overly sceptical, it might also be argued that communicative principles lent themselves to (unwarranted) interpretations which minimalised teacher involvement, or at least initiative. Consequently they were for some an attractive proposition, particularly those used to the very teacher-fronted, highly controlled classrooms characteristic of preceding eras. Whatever the reasons for the way in which people have come to understand CLT, Holliday would appear to be correct in his assertion that...

> ...much of the bad press which the communicative approach has attracted is due to myths which have been built around it ...such as 'communicative equals oral work', 'communicative equals group work' or 'communicative equals getting rid of the teacher as a major focus in the classroom'.
>
> (Holliday 1994, p. 165)

The authenticity principle has been identified as a key principle of CLT, yet one that has been prey to a lack of rigorous critical examination of the kind referred to in Chapters 1 and 2. Once its integrity *is* called into question, however, something akin to a domino effect appears to result, the implications of which have been the focus of this chapter. It is important to stress that the adjustments in perspective this analysis advises in no way seek to undermine the validity and credibility of the theoretical developments (outlined in chapter 4) that spawned the approach; quite the contrary. Thus, for example, the need to ensure *during the learning process* that the learner develops an appreciation of the way in which form and context work together to establish meaning remains as a crucial element of CLT and one which reflects the concerns of protagonists such as Firth, Halliday and Hymes. What seems clear, nevertheless, is that the rewards promised by analyses of the kind undertaken here in terms of a more clearly defined, coherent and flexible approach to language teaching where those theoretical insights are soundly and consistently realised, are potentially great.

In order to reasonably assess the significance of such "rewards", however, our discussion must now turn from being strictly one of rationale exposition to a consideration of context; of particular instances of application. That is, it is now necessary to inquire how the reformulation of CLT proposed above would fare in a particular teaching-learning situation; whether the clarity this and previous chapters have attempted to bring to the conceptual structure of CLT has a corresponding pay-off in terms of its effective implementation. Assuming there is such a pay-off, a crucial second issue which subsequently needs addressing is how teacher education schemes can develop in student teachers the kind of conceptual clarity advocated that is necessary to ensuring its realisation, and whether such schemes will always need to be rehabilitated to some extent according to the cultural dispositions of their recipients - and in the case of this study in particular, Japanese language teachers.

In light of these considerations, Chapter 7 will focus on the Japanese language teaching context and its historical roots; Chapter 8 will identify in

detail the contradictions between that context and CLT as it is generally understood, and subsequently illustrate how a revision of the approach can reconcile those contradictions; Chapter 9 will look at a series of proposals for language teacher education programmes, while Chapter 10 will attempt to gauge their feasibility according to Japanese educational traditions and character traits.

Chapter 7

JAPAN REVISITED: EDUCATIONAL TRADITIONS AND THEIR MANIFESTATION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

7.1 Introduction

The potential practical significance of ideas in language teaching can only be fully appreciated when looked at in terms of their application to particular teaching-learning contexts. It follows, so I have argued, that in seeing how those ideas interact with the physical, economic and socio-cultural realities of a specific language learning environment one is better able to understand the implicational importance of the kind of thorough examination of ideas proposed above. This is no better illustrated than in the rather fraught nature of the relationship that has existed in recent years between communicative language teaching and traditional Japanese classroom dynamics - something alluded to briefly in Chapter 1. As I hope to show below, in the case of Japan the kind of perspective established in Chapter 6 which reinstates a number of pedagogical ideas previously seen as being at odds with the principles of CLT allows for the possibility of a far more harmonious relationship between culture and language teaching developments.

Before looking at the nature of that reconciliation, however, and in order to fully understand the problem that has infiltrated many English language classrooms, it is first necessary to identify the historical origins of classroom attitudes and behaviour in Japan.

7.2 Characteristics of the Japanese English Language Classroom: The Historical Foundations

Rohlen (1983) identifies three distinct traditions of secondary education in Japan: the Confucian, the prewar élite, and the American. These three traditions can fairly be said to apply also to tertiary level education and to a lesser degree primary, although Rohlen chooses not to concern himself with these.

The Confucian legacy is particularly evident in the realm of interpersonal relations, providing as it does clearly defined standards for teacher and student behaviour or conduct within the school context; standards that translate to what Rohlen refers to as a "family-like community" where "...the teachers and their students have familial roles to play" (1983, p. 75).

The prewar tradition is encapsulated in the ethic of hard work and efficiency in meeting competition; an axiom clearly reflected in the kind of rigorous preparation and intense "cramming" for high school and university Japanese students have become renowned for and which has promoted the establishment and success of *juku* (cramming schools). The rewards and punishments which, as Rohlen observes, are its ultimate concern, "...stem from the hierarchical facts of life so much appreciated in Japan" and very much the product of the Confucian philosophy spoken of above.

The American model's role is largely to provide legitimacy to extra-curricular school activities by allowing for their association with 'democratic education'. It is, Rohlen states, "the source of political rhetoric and the guiding principle for reform of high school education" (ibid., p. 75). Nevertheless, many regard its influence with some suspicion mainly on the grounds that the diversity and choice it promotes are not in keeping with the more firmly entrenched Confucian ideal of social order and the prewar notions of efficient preparation.

Of these three traditions, it is perhaps true to say that it is the Confucian philosophy and the prewar movement that are most relevant in providing an explanation for current ethics and attitudes in Japanese education. Three main reasons might be cited in support of this view: Firstly, the historical roots of the two traditions are long and have consequently become firmly ingrained in the Japanese character and system of education. Secondly, unlike the American model which was a product of the occupation and thus imported and taken on board 'under duress' in the aftermath of war, Confucian philosophy and the prewar movement were motivated from within, not imposed as such - although, in the case of the latter, external factors did influence decisions of the Japanese government. Finally, developments in the Japanese education system during the occupation had to do more with content modifications than a change in fundamental values. Indeed, one of the problems the American model encountered and which continues to plague education

in Japan has been the friction caused by the mismatch of enduring values borne of the Confucian and prewar traditions alongside those content modifications associated with the American model.

In light of these considerations, the analysis below focuses in particular on the role of the Confucian and prewar traditions.

7.2.1 Confucianism

Ellington (1992, p. 20) notes that "the overarching values that influence Japanese today" are those of hierarchy and groupism; values that were celebrated by Confucianists and which have undoubtedly come very much to represent the West's stereotype of Japanese society. The fact that groupism and hierarchy (a remnant of feudal Japan) remain very much at the heart of Japanese life is especially evident in the educational context, as sections 7.4 and 7.5 seek to illustrate.

With regard to hierarchy, Confucianism saw the well-being and improvement of society as being dependent upon the existence of and harmony between different social classes, and the "loyalty and obedience of subordinate to superior was made the highest moral virtue" among the Japanese (Rohlen ibid., pp. 48-49). In discussing the development of Japanese attitudes as an explanation for current socio-educational behaviour, Ellington states, with reference to the Tokugawa period (1600 - 1868), that:

> Filial piety, much emphasised in Confucianism, formed a philosophical basis for daily life. Various family members were, according to age or gender, assigned specific status and roles. In the larger society, Confucian admonitions that moral people followed form and ritual and exhibited appropriate respect for superiors reinforced the growing Japanese adherence to status and hierarchy as an important form of social organisation.
>
> (Ellington 1992, p. 13)

The pervasiveness of hierarchy in Japan is evident in the home, school life and the work place. At home, particular terms of address are used when speaking to one's older sister or brother, for these are seen as being more respectful than first names. At school, individual status is designated by the terms *sempai* (seniors), *kohai* (juniors) and *doryo* (equals). Thus in school clubs, for example, the sempai are treated as superiors by the kohai - something which, Ellington notes, continues into later life if

and when former members meet again as adults. The expression of relative status is achieved by both behavioural and linguistic means. In the work place sempai use the term *kun* when addressing or referring to younger associates, whilst kohai address their superiors using the polite suffix *san*. What many Westerners see as the overuse of business cards by Japanese is in reality an efficient way of quickly establishing each other's respective status which in turn will determine the kind of language and behaviour they will adopt.

Hierarchy regulates both individual and organisational behaviour, and as Ellington observes, "the famed group spirit and team play works so well for the Japanese in part because every individual knows his or her place within the organisation and usually behaves accordingly" (ibid., p. 9). Thus, for example, prestigious companies employ graduates from the top universities, middle-level companies recruit from middle-level universities etc.

Groupism in Japanese society was largely - though not solely - the product of the Confucian emphasis on harmony and co-operation between members of society. Other factors responsible for the group-oriented attitudes and behaviours of Japanese as well as the establishment of hierarchy include the physical realities of the Japanese archipelago and the nature of life which, Ellington suggests...

> encouraged the development of social organisations where individual interests were subordinated to the greater needs of the group. Over time, Japanese came to believe that ascribed roles in social groups were important in providing focus and direction for an individual's life.
>
> (Ellington ibid., p. 11).

Thus factors such as vulnerability to earthquakes and typhoons and the associated devastation to people and property inclined the Japanese toward an ethic of co-operation, forcing them to work together to survive. So too with lack of living space and thus privacy; factors that necessitated an attitude of tolerance and co-operation if tension and conflict were to be avoided. Such attitudes were, as Ellington notes, better able to flourish among a population as homogenous as that of Japan.

The pressure to conform to group goals rather than submit to individual orientations is captured in one of the oldest Japanese proverbs which states: "The nail which sticks up gets pounded down". It is in keeping with this axiom that company employees are expected to dress

alike - and suffer the consequences if they choose to flout those expectations. Similarly with employees exercising together before beginning their working day, and the inclination to take vacations in groups. This tendency to identify with the group so as to virtually become one with it is nurtured from the earliest age in the family, and thereafter at school, in the workplace, and in clubs and similar organisations. The group's triumph takes precedence over ego: Subject pronouns such as *I*, *you*, *he* and *she* are frequently dropped, decision-making is far more likely to be the result of consultation than individual action, and individuals will "often identify themselves by group affiliation rather than functional speciality" (Ellington, ibid. p. 6).

In addition to promoting these overarching values of hierarchy and groupism in Japanese society, Confucianism also emphasised other values that have become ingrained in the Japanese mentality, most notably the importance of harmony, the conceptualisation of learning as a moral activity, and a distrust of excessively verbal people. Together, all these traditions have established an ethos which, as we shall see, sets rigid parameters on classroom behaviour.

7.2.2 The Prewar Tradition

The prewar period dating from the end of Tokugawa rule and the beginning of the Meiji era (1868) was characterised by the desire for modernisation in Japan, largely in response to continual international problems and a feeling that Western powers were encroaching too heavily on the political and economic life of Japan. In order to counter this state of affairs and put the nation economically and militarily on an equal footing with the West and in control of its own destiny, education was afforded a key role in this process of change and modernisation. As such, despite historically isolationist and ethnocentric tendencies and considerable reaction from within, Japan's leaders looked to the West for inspiration. Rohlen describes some of the consequences of this policy as follows:

> Student uniforms, Western art and music, science and mathematics curricula, considerations of school architecture, the use of desks and blackboards, and hundreds of other details were imported and retained. All of this was combined with an essentially Confucian outlook and a nationalistic set of goals.
>
> (Rohlen 1983, p. 55)

By the late 1900s, the Japanese government had combined "a new Western curriculum with an older moral underpinning designed to produce a citizenry subservient to the larger interests of the new empire" (Ellington 1991, p. 23), and in this regard it is noteworthy that Rohlen goes on to state that:

> Today... the basic political issues have hardly disappeared. The ambiguity felt about the contradictions between Western and Japanese culture remains.
>
> (Rohlen, ibid. p. 57)

A meritocratic system was the product of the Meiji government's goal of setting up an educational structure that would spawn students qualified to serve the nation and thus impel it forward to a new level of international competition. The idea was to ensure that talented individuals (almost exclusively men) would rise to important leadership positions, exhibit loyalty and generate industrial and military strength. The élite educational paths, composed of two types of middle school followed by university for "a precious few students", are described by Ellington in the following terms:

> Entrance to the two-year and, later, three-year ordinary middle schools was determined by competitive examination. After negotiating a difficult Western and traditional curriculum, those students who hoped to later attend university competed, again by examination, for entrance into at first five, and later seven, national middle schools. The examination for the three-year higher middle schools was the critical test, as students who gained admission were virtually guaranteed later entrance to imperial universities.
>
> (Ellington 1992, p. 24)

The fact that only 20% of middle school graduates qualified for higher schools is a good indication of the strength of competition that existed. *Only* higher middle school graduates gained admission to the imperial universities which were considered superior to private alternatives and almost invariably formed a platform for advancement into positions of power and prestige. Entrance examinations thus became the key to advancement and ambition. In discussing this phenomenon, Rohlen remarks:

> A simple but powerful formula that has dominated Japanese secondary education ever since was thus established: the difficulty of a school's entrance exams is the crucial measure of its students' talent. Employers choose to let this criterion of school reputation,

> rather than an individual's grades or subjects studied, guide their selection of personnel for managerial jobs. Entrance exams thus became the route to success. The formula has not changed in a hundred years.
>
> (Rohlen 1983, pp. 58-59)

Rohlen goes on to point out that this meritocratic system which developed during the prewar period became self-perpetuating, each generation of leaders committed by their own careers to its basic values. Today, the Japanese Ministry of Education continues to recognise it as a fact of life and has stated:

> University graduation is considered in Japan as an absolute requirement for desirable employment; while graduation from one of the few "prestige" universities is considered as the equivalent of a guarantee of economic success. Consequently competition for admission to a university is so keen as to be, all too often, actually desperate.
>
> (Ministry of Education JAPAN, 1964, pp. 83-4)

Let us then now look at how these two traditions, the Confucian and Prewar, are manifest today in Japanese classroom behaviour, and the way in which they determine even the architecture and physical layout of classrooms.

7.3 The Legacy of the Confucian and Prewar Traditions: The Dynamics of Contemporary Japanese Classrooms

7.3.1 *Shiken Jigoku* (Examination Hell)

As Rohlen and The Japanese Ministry of Education suggest above, extreme competition for places in prestigious schools and universities remains a fundamental characteristic of Japanese education, not least because successful entrance to those institutions virtually guarantees the best career opportunities. Conversely, failure to gain admission may severely hamper ultimate career achievement in this strongly hierarchical society. Moreover, as we have noted, the reputation of educational institutions rests upon the number of students they manage to secure places in prestigious high schools, universities or companies and government posts. As such, it is in the interests of both the students as well as the

schools and universities themselves to ensure that performance in entrance examinations is optimal. This has led to what Ellington terms "educational credentialism", something which, for the students, results in immense psychological pressure throughout their high school years in particular; so much so that the term *shiken jigoku* (examination hell) has become a cliché and is universally understood among Japanese.

This emphasis on examinations and successful performance therein profoundly influences the teaching-learning process and the classroom strategies employed. Because examinations focus almost entirely on factual knowledge, in schools teachers emphasise the facts, disregarding for the most part other intellectual avenues such as student questions, discussion and debate. Thus, while they may wish to use other pedagogical methods, their hands are tied by the nature of the educational system and public perceptions which see the teacher's role as one of preparing students for high school and university examinations rather than stimulating them and developing their expressive and critical skills. Didactic instruction is, perhaps not unreasonably, seen as the most efficient way of fulfilling that role. As a result, Japanese classes are typically characterised by teacher lecture, drill, practice and recitation. Cummings (1980) states:

> The basic pattern of teaching involves lectures, directions, and questions from the teacher to the students with relatively little interaction initiated by the students. At any given time, all of the students concentrate on the same subject matter and rarely is classroom time set aside for independent study or individualized instruction.
>
> (Cummings 1980, p. 125)

Where, if at all, this routine is departed from and students do work in groups, the activity tends to be highly structured and controlled.

A Ministry of Education (Mombusho) national curriculum guide tends to reinforce the fact-oriented nature of teaching. The course of study the Mombusho defines and the textbooks through which it is realised "heavily emphasise facts at the expense of analysis or diversity of viewpoint. Teachers are expected to finish both courses of study and textbooks by the end of the academic term. Lectures are the most efficient way for a teacher to meet this expectation" (Ellington 1992, p. 111). The pressure on teachers to conform to institutional and public expectations by subordinating personal pedagogical instincts to 'the textbook' is captured

in Rohlen's observation that "...only by recognising the centrality of the textbook do teachers retain significant pedagogical authority" (1993, p. 243).

7.3.2 Realising Confucian Principles and Feudal Ideals

The kind of classroom dynamics the examination system in Japan promotes dovetail neatly with those principles that derive from Confucian teachings and feudalism. In this respect the two reinforce each other, a fact which may go some way to explaining the resilience of the system to change. Central to Confucian beliefs, for example, is the idea that knowledge is passed from teacher to student and not discovered jointly by the two. Consequently there exists no need for students to ask questions, and instead they perceive their role as listening, drilling, practising, reciting and persevering. The model student passively soaks up knowledge imparted via teacher and textbook. In essence, the teacher is supreme. Ellington states:

> ...a combination of factors, including Confucianism and the rigidly hierarchical nature of Japanese society, make student-teacher classroom relations more formal than elsewhere. Generally, students honour teachers but do not approach them on a casual basis or dispute points with their instructors. This causes Japanese students not to be particularly eager to voice their opinions or ask questions in the classroom.
>
> (Ellington 1992, p. 112)

Because of hierarchy and notions of obedience, the elevation of the teacher, the emphasis on the group (as opposed to the individual) and the concomitant distrust of overly verbal individuals, student behaviour has necessarily to conform to very tightly defined paths, as a result of which students feel uncomfortable speaking up above peers and initiating in any way.

What is of particular interest here is the apparent conflict between the goals of meritocratic selection as part of the hierarchical system, and preserving egalitarianism, co-operative teamwork and harmony in what White translates as "a 'classroom kingdom' of equals" (*kyoshitsu ohoku*) (1987, p. 115). He observes:

> The need to maintain both has produced a split in the educational system, but one which seems composed of complementary rather than conflicting elements.
>
> (White 1987, p. 76)

Whilst harmony, equality and *amae* (dependency upon others and what Ellington calls "the basic glue that makes groupism work in Japan" (ibid., p. 38)) are faithfully maintained in the classroom, the principle of competitive selection is served in the *juku* (evening cramming schools - see 7.2 above). These privately run establishments are now widespread in Japan and attendance of them is seen by most as prerequisite to successful performance in entrance examinations. Most believe, perhaps correctly, that it is these schools which make the difference and allow the more gifted students to shine. Thus, in White's words, juku provide "...the battleground, at a safe distance from traditional institutions, on which the competition necessary to sustain a modern occupational system can occur" (ibid., p. 78).

The Japanese Communicative Style: Anderson's Four Characteristics

In an article entitled "The Enigma of the Japanese Classroom: Nails That Don't Stick Up" (1992), Anderson identifies four key characteristics of the Japanese communicative style which, he argues, are related to classroom behaviour: group-mindedness, consensual decision-making, formalised speechmaking, and listener responsibility.

While Anderson points out that group consciousness (discussed above) is less in evidence in the classroom in senior high school where, as we have seen, the dominance of entrance examinations leads to a very non-interactive classroom dynamic, nevertheless, it is still very much part of the Japanese student's psychological make-up and thus governs his behaviour accordingly whenever situations arise where there is a natural inclination for it to do so and other rules of behaviour do not inhibit its operation.

Anderson's second characteristic, consensual decision-making, is clearly related to that of group-mindedness in the sense that frequently the way in which group-mindedness is realised in the classroom is through the tendency toward unanimity, a de-emphasis on individual opinion, and the practice of consensus checking among students - something foreign teachers find puzzling and annoying, as Anderson rightly observes. On being asked a question, there is a natural inclination for the individual to consult with his peers (often for some considerable time) before hesitantly venturing an answer.

Anderson speaks of formalised - "almost ritual" - speech making as contrasting with "the casual expression of 'original' ideas so esteemed in

the West in both public and private interaction" (1992, p. 105). This phenomenon has its roots in early education. From elementary school,

> students' responses to the teacher's solicitations are often structured like mini-speeches: The student stands up straight, loudly presents an answer in a variety of Japanese more formal and closer to the written language than that of everyday conversation, and then sits down.
>
> (Anderson 1992, pp. 105-106)

Anderson goes on to quote White who suggests that the ritualistic and predictable nature of language in the classroom removes the children from responsibility for their own pronouncements. This idea is consistent with the de-emphasis on individualism, the maintenance of harmony and the smooth operation of hierarchy. Students who are forced in any way to diverge from these ritualistic exchanges in the classroom and thereby break with deeply engraved norms of behaviour feel noticeably uncomfortable and disorientated.

Anderson's fourth characteristic refers to the burden placed on the listener for making sense of a conversation. Unlike in western cultures where the onus is on the speaker to ensure that a message has been transmitted clearly, in Japan the responsibility falls more on the listener who, Anderson claims, "may be too embarrassed about not having understood the message to request clarification. This embarrassment plays a major role in the reticence of Japanese students in foreign language classes" (ibid., p. 106).

7.3.3 The Physical Environment

Not surprisingly, the conditions described in sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 are reflected in the physical environment of the classroom which is clearly designed for conventional teaching. Cummings describes a typical Japanese classroom as follows:

> At the front of each classroom is a blackboard and often a raised platform from which the teachers are expected to teach. On the side opposite the door are windows, and along the back side are a bulletin board and cubbyholes for each student. Desks and chairs are usually arranged in six straight rows of six to seven seats facing the front. One rarely sees a classroom that departs from this arrangement.
>
> (Cummings 1980, pp. 124-125)

Commonplace also are classrooms which number an average of 42 students per teacher (White 1987, p. 68);[6] a set up that is in keeping with an ethos of high discipline/control and a non-interactive, lecture-based teaching learning process, but from almost any other perspective highly constraining and inefficient.

7.3.4 Japanese Education: "Classical Humanism" at Work

Adopting a conceptual framework set out by Skilbeck (1982), Clark (1987) discusses three broad value systems which, he says, permeate the contemporary educational process. These are *classical humanism, reconstructionism* and *progressivism.* Clark summarizes the essential characteristics of each as follows:

<u>Classical Humanism</u>

- the maintenance and transmission through education of the wisdom and culture of previous generations. This has led to the creation of a two-tier system of education - one to accord with the 'higher' cultural traditions of an élite, and the other to cater for the more concrete and practical life-styles of the masses
- the development for the élite of generalizable intellectual capacities and critical faculties
- the maintenance of standards through an inspectorate and external examination boards controlled by the universities.

<u>Reconstructionism</u>

- effecting social change through education planned to bring it about
- the equal valuing of all citizens
- reaching a consensus on goals to be achieved followed by rigorous planning of the means to bring them about
- comprehensive schooling with a common core curriculum and mixed-ability classes
- promoting intranational and international understanding through effective communication.

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6 Rohlen (1983, pp. 171-172) suggests this number increases for private high schools where 55 students is typical.

Progressivism

- individual growth from within through interaction with a favourable environment
- learning through experience
- a speculative view of knowledge
- natural learning processes and stages of development
- sensitivity to the interests, rhythms, and styles of learning of individual learners
- the learner as a whole person
- the social nature of the learner and the development of healthy relationships with others in the classroom community
- the promotion of learner responsibility and of learning how to learn.

(Taken from Clark 1987)

From these brief descriptions, the Japanese educational system as described above could be accurately said to conform most closely to the classical humanist tradition. This becomes particularly evident when one considers Clark's description of the classical humanist curriculum as follows:

- the fundamental aim is to promote generalizable intellectual capacities
- an analysis of the content of a particular subject into its constituent elements of knowledge determines what is to be taught and learnt. This is then sequenced in what is deemed to be a logical way from the simple to the more complex
- a course book is created to cover the various elements of knowledge
- unit-by-unit objectives are seen in terms of conscious control of the various elements of knowledge set out along the way
- all learners in a class are expected to move through the course book at the same pace
- the methodology employed lays emphasis on conscious awareness of rules an patterns, and subsequent application of them in controlled and then more open contexts
- assessment is norm-referenced and concerned with the selection and placement of those who will enter the next stage of education
- reporting is seen in terms of awarding each pupil an aggregate mark or grade for each subject studied.

How these curriculum characteristics are realised in the development of current language teaching practices in Japan is the focus of the next two sections. What is immediately clear, however, is that many of the features associated with reconstructionism and progressivism are close in spirit to the motivation for and principles of a communicative approach to language teaching. On the other hand, those features associated with classical humanism and the curriculum it advocates are very much in tune with the traditional grammar-translation approach to language teaching and the pronounced literary and cultural emphasis that goes with it.

7.4 Japanese Traditions in Language Teaching

In order to fully understand the current language teaching situation in particular as it exists in Japanese classrooms and the kinds of problems and idiosyncrasies it exhibits, in addition to an appreciation of the influence of the Confucian and prewar traditions, the physical environment etc., there needs also to be some consideration given specifically to the development of language teaching in Japan and the forces that have shaped it.

Tripp states that "The teaching of modern languages has always been somewhat influenced by the teaching of the classical languages" (1985). In the Western world these were Greek and Latin, and the methods used for teaching them were later applied to the teaching of modern languages and became the object of numerous reform efforts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Similarly, firmly entrenched pedagogical traditions have formed in Japan based upon a Chinese tradition. These, as Henrichsen (1989, p. 104) notes, "have demonstrated a remarkable power to persist" and for the most part have failed to encourage proficiency in spoken English and conversational skills. According to Henrichsen, this tradition...

> ...started when Japanese scholars studied Chinese in the fourth century. Over a thousand years later, this approach continued with teachers and students of Dutch. It persisted when the switch was made to English and later became one of the major obstacles to the Oral Approach. Another Japanese language-teaching tradition ... was a Japanese-style "grammar translation" approach called *yakudoku,* which originated with the study of Chinese more than a millennium earlier.
>
> (Henrichsen 1989, p. 104)

Nakata ties the preponderance of grammar-translation to the more recent prewar Meiji era when, he claims, "The Japanese government ...tried to introduce Western thought and civilization through enormous quantities of translations, not to mention original works" (1990, p. 77). Such origins, Nakata goes on to say, are "...still reflected in the pedagogic principles of the syllabus designs and consequently also in the teaching methods and materials employed in English classes of the present-day Japan" (ibid., p. 88). Not surprisingly, these dispositions are reflected in the critical entrance examinations spoken of above which tend to be dominated by translation exercises, discrete point items and an overall focus on form. Thus, with regard to university entrance examinations, Nakata observes that questions...

> ...measure how much grammatical (or linguistic) competence the examinee has achieved during her or his six years of learning. Thus university applicants usually try hard as much as possible to memorise the English vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and constructions simply as "usage" decontextualised from the actual use of the language.
>
> (Nakata 1990, p. 81)

Likewise, Henrichsen states that examinations "focus on fine points of grammar, low frequency vocabulary, and translation skills" (ibid., p. 176).

It would appear that H. E. Palmer, one of the first to attempt to reform Japanese teaching practices earlier this century in favour of oral methods, was similarly up against the affinity for traditional language teaching practices that were the product of the kinds of historical, social and cultural forces described above. In discussing Palmer's work in Japan, Howatt relates:

> ...his enthusiasm for oral methods did not always suit the established patterns of relationships in Japanese classrooms. To work properly, oral activities require both linguistic self-confidence and a certain amount of histrionic gusto. As a native speaker, Palmer did not have to worry about the former, and as a keen amateur actor he no doubt exhibited plenty of the latter. His Japanese customers, however, preferred reading and 'felt the oral method was valid only when a native English speaker conducted the class'[7] ...In a Japanese school ...with complex traditions of behaviour quite unlike European schools, and with teachers who

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7 Yamamoto, N. Y. 1978. 'The Oral Method: Harold E. Palmer and the reformation of the teaching of English language in Japan.' *English Language Teaching Journal* 32/2: 151-8.

> had little confidence in their spoken fluency, it was unrealistic to hope that the validity of the method would overcome the bruising sensitivities that would accompany an attempt to implement it.
>
> (Howatt 1984, pp. 233-234)

Significantly, Howatt further points out that one of the reasons Palmer failed to convince his Japanese hosts of the viability of the oral method was that it would have involved...

> ...requests to change the all-important assessment system, and, possibly more alarming in its implications, a need for massive teacher retraining, including trips abroad. Basically, the Japanese did not want radical notions such as the Oral Method.
>
> (Howatt ibid, p. 234)

7.5 Summary: A Profile of the Typical English Language Classroom in Japan

Given this description of the various background factors affecting classroom dynamics in Japan, a picture emerges of English language classes distinguishable by the following characteristics all of which, it will become evident, are closely inter-related:

- English classes are large, traditionally laid out and predominantly teacher-fronted. Students are passive for the most part, listening to teacher explanations of grammar, occasionally being required to respond to a technical question or participate in a choral drill, and completing translation exercises. Students rarely, if ever, question the teacher, and activities centre around the textbook which comprises traditional explanations of grammar usage, vocabulary and idioms. This situation is wholly in keeping with the notion of hierarchy, the idea that the individual ought not to stand out, and the belief that silence is praiseworthy in that it signals thoughtfulness, trustworthiness and respectability. It is also in keeping with certain of the practical realities discussed above. Firstly, students need to pass traditional tests where conversational ability is often irrelevant. This undermines the case for interactive classrooms which might be seen as a less efficient way of meeting examination goals. Rohlen quotes a Japanese high school English teacher as saying to him, "I know I can't speak English, and your presence in the school embarrasses me, but I

study the fine points of English grammar, and this is more helpful to my students. They can use it on the exams" (1983, p. 244). Secondly, themselves products of traditional methods of language teaching, many Japanese English teachers simply do not have the confidence and/or oral ability to be able to teach it to their students. The upshot of this is that role play, group work, discussions etc. are rarely found in English language classrooms.

- If students are asked to respond individually to a question, the reluctance to stand out from the rest of the class is manifested in a tendency to consult/check with peers before hesitantly offering a response. Kimizuka states that "Japanese students are self-conscious, shy, reserved, afraid to make mistakes, [and] reluctant to speak up..." (1979, p. 8).

- Consistent with both teacher-fronted classrooms (where oral skills are de-emphasised) and a reluctance to speak up in English classes is a characteristic of the Japanese psychology which affects behaviour in the language classroom and has to do with what Reischauer describes as the "Japanese sense of being somehow a separate people - of being unique" (1977, p. 401). Henrichsen speaks of "Japanese students' strong sense of native-language identity and native-group loyalty" which, he suggests, "...may help explain why they are such poor language learners" (ibid., p. 160). There is, he goes on, "a widespread fear of losing one's "Japaneseness." Many Japanese believe that "the acquisition of a foreign language will endanger one's native language and his native culture, which are generally viewed as very fragile and very vulnerable" (Brosnahan and Haynes 1971, p. 76). Reinforcing this attitude is the belief that bilinguals are foolish and untrustworthy and thus becoming too proficient in English is undesirable. Being a strong indicator of group identity and loyalty, pronunciation is not surprisingly a casualty of this attitude, as is conversational proficiency in general. Henrichsen quotes McLean who explains:

> In spite of all the talk of learning English to become more internationally-minded most Japanese are still obsessed by the fear of somehow losing their "ethnic uniqueness", their Yamato Damashii or Japanese spirit. English, then, cannot be allowed to threaten this mental parochialism, and so it is taught in a very special way.
>
> (McLean 1984, p. 22)

In other words, the emphasis on traditional teaching methods (and grammar-translation in particular), hierarchy, the group and ritualistic language and patterns of interaction all compound to allow control and the status quo to be maintained. Social, political and educational forces interact and conspire against any well-intentioned, and theoretically informed move that may rock the boat and upset that status quo. Indeed the penalties for trying to do so may be great. Moreover, given that this is the system into which the majority of teachers and students are conditioned, it is almost inevitable that the introduction of any aspect of teaching/learning at odds with these characteristics risks causing discomfort, embarrassment, aggravation and very likely frustration for both teacher and students.

In discussing the Japanese low tolerance of innovative approaches, Henrichsen quotes Flenley (1989) who...

> reports how a Japanese teacher of English employed a teaching innovation, which worked successfully, but soon abandoned it because of fears that she would be perceived as being too different. In this case, social pressure to conform to the status quo over-powered pedagogical effectiveness.
>
> (Henrichsen 1989, p. 161 - paraphrasing Flenley 1989)

Flenley here emphasises an important reality of the Japanese English language classroom situation. I shall argue later that innovations which run strongly counter to socio-cultural inclinations are likely to be ineffective even in situations where they *are* adopted, and ought therefore to be 'tuned' to accommodate local idiosyncrasies where possible.

The general point that practitioners need to take such realities into account when applying and adjusting pedagogical ideas is reinforced by Scollon and Scollon who, in reference to English teaching in China, which like Japan is influenced by Confucian behavioural principles, comment:

> The Confucian emphasis on benevolence and respect between teacher and student makes it difficult to use conversational English teaching methods which are based on Western assumptions about classroom relations between teachers and students. If an English teacher does not first take this cultural difference into account, the direct application of conversational methods can produce frustration in the teacher and a sense in the students that the teacher is not behaving appropriately.
>
> (Unpublished; cited in Cazden 1990, pp. 722-723)

Let us now look at the way in which these behavioural principles and the realities of the Japanese education system as described in the above profile are (i) at odds with CLT as it is commonly understood, and (ii) reconcilable with the reformulation of CLT principles expounded in Chapter 6.

Chapter 8

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND THE JAPANESE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: INCOMPATIBILITIES, RESOLUTIONS AND THE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF A NEW PERSPECTIVE

8.1 Reviewing the Necessary Principles of Communicative Language Teaching

As a preface to a consideration of how CLT and Japanese culture as manifested in the English language classroom sit in relation to one another, it is helpful to reiterate those principles established in Chapter 3 as necessary to the communicative approach given its theoretical impetus. These were as follows:

- Errors should be tolerated as a natural part of the learning process.
- *Comprehensible* pronunciation should be sought.
- Students should work with language at the discourse level.
- Opportunities should exist for interaction.
- Linguistic variation should be encouraged.
- The culture as well as the language needs to be taught.
- Classrooms should be learner-centred.
- Learner autonomy should be encouraged.
- Recognition was also given to the fact that while fluency and meaning need not necessarily *predominate* over accuracy and form respectively in the classroom, nevertheless they *do* need to feature in classrooms where communicative competence is the goal of teaching/learning.

8.2 The Pre-Revisionist View of CLT: Spelling Out Incompatibilities

It is not difficult to see that a good many of these pedagogic principles are in direct conflict with those behavioural principles governing Japanese

classroom dynamics in general, and English language classrooms in particular. Let us now look in detail at the nature of these incompatibilities.

8.2.1 The Teaching of Culture Vs. Ethnocentrism & Antipathy Toward Western Values/Lifestyle

The notion of teaching culture can be seen as a threat to what are regarded by many as the superior virtues, values and lifestyle of the Japanese. That is, by teaching cultural characteristics which in many ways will be at odds with local norms there is the perceived risk that the learner's own character and Japaneseness might somehow be partially lost, much as Brosnahan and Hayes suggest above (7.5). For anyone who has spent a few years teaching in Japan, there is a tangible sense that the values etc. associated with Western culture are in many cases seen as decadent, an 'evil' (sometimes a necessary one) infiltrating a traditionally protective, isolationist and (to Japanese eyes) unique nation. Thus there is a trade-off of sorts - one viewed as less than ideal by most Japanese - between the commercial pressures of internationalisation, which make the study of English a necessity, and highly valued cultural traditions. If there is an option to teach English 'adequately' *without* exposing the individual to too much Western culture or influence, then that is for many the best compromise.

It must be said, however, that there has been a slight shift away from this kind of parochialism in recent years, particularly among the younger generation. It is somewhat ironic, even paradoxical, that despite frequently manifesting a very ethnocentric disposition, these individuals are, nevertheless, inclined to view things Western (and particularly American) with a certain awe. For many the allurement of a relatively liberal society, where opportunity is far less constrained by rigid codes of behaviour, time-honoured hierarchical conventions etc., is an undeniable fact. However, the kind of almost idealistic fascination such things hold is almost always tempered by what is best described as an ambivalence toward the West; and it is in part this ability to remain ambivalent which has ensured that traditional teaching methods, and grammar-translation in particular, have become so firmly entrenched and persist so tenaciously.

8.2.2 Discourse, Interaction & Negotiated Meaning Vs. Traditional Examinations & Classroom Behaviour

The importance recognised by communicative competence theory of the broader context of communication in the establishing of meaning has naturally led to an emphasis in CLT on discourse and the ability to speak/write appropriately and interpret correctly according to the structure of the discourse surrounding, or 'framing', one's contribution. Moreover, communicative competence emphasises the need to be able to do this on-line during the course of conversation; that is, with a degree of fluency and whilst coping with the unpredictability characteristic of most natural communication. It was suggested in Chapter 3 that interaction in the language classroom provides learners with the opportunity to practise negotiating meaning and developing strategies for dealing with conversational contingencies. Indeed without interaction it is difficult to imagine how such skills can be expected to develop. In the Japanese context two factors confound the application of this principle.

Firstly, and less critically I suggest, interaction in the classroom is still seen by many institutions as largely irrelevant given the generally traditional nature of most entrance examinations. It is therefore difficult for them to justify from an efficiency point of view; i.e. it is not considered time well spent. Although it is only fair to point out that the number of higher education institutions including an oral-aural component in their entrance examinations is increasing, the rate at which such change is taking place is very slow, and in many cases it is questionable as to the extent to which the more 'communicative' tests do in point of fact test students' communicative proficiency, for they are often little more than a selection of test items typical of the structural tradition, but recorded on audio tape. This leads one to question how informed these institutions/test constructors are about what exactly CLT represents. Furthermore it suggests, possibly, that in certain cases the desire to give programmes and procedures face validity predominates over any deep-rooted desire to move away from traditional practices.

The second factor concerns traditional teacher-student roles, roles which are evidently not conducive to interactive activities. The mismatch in this regard will become more apparent in the following discussion of the principles of learner-centredness and learner autonomy the application of both of which involves dealing with a similar obstacle.

8.2.3 Learner-Centred Classrooms/Learner Autonomy Vs. Confucian Ideals and a Powerful Respect for Tradition

Learner-centred classrooms - very much a product in CLT of the need for interaction - are clearly the antithesis of the very controlled, teacher-fronted classrooms that have resulted from Confucian ideals, well established notions of hierarchy, and educational élitism. As we have seen, it is the teacher who is expected to initiate; as the 'knower', he is expected to give forth and impart his knowledge, while his students, on the other hand, are expected to be eager but passive recipients. That is their role in the teaching-learning process. They expect and are expected to be talked to, not to have to do the talking, ask questions or query.

Likewise with learner autonomy, a closely related notion. In a "classical-humanist"/"position-oriented" system where it is understood that the student behaves as subservient and teaching/learning proceeds according to a very clearly and rigidly defined modus operandi, there is little room for any kind of learner autonomy that would release the teacher's control and permit learners to wander from those established patterns of behaviour. The fact is that although there is and always has been talk of reform from certain quarters, the teaching-learning process as it presently exists continues, nevertheless, to be widely sanctioned by Japan's educational, social, political and commercial institutions. This is a culture that respects tradition, regarding it as virtuous and praiseworthy in itself. Consequently, the degree to which it is conformed to represents an important gauge of how well the teacher and the institution employing him are doing their job, and indeed how properly and piously the student is performing his role. As such, any teacher who flouts expectations and breaks with these norms risks paying a severe penalty, as Flenley suggests (see 7.5).

Given then that there is little to be gained and much to be lost from a well-intentioned break with tradition in the interests of responding to theoretical developments in language teaching and producing communicatively competent students through learner-centred classrooms, it is only reasonable that the great majority of teachers should opt to maintain the status quo; and it is natural that, for the most part, they should be extremely wary of ideas which threaten to upset a widely sanctioned and highly integrated system, even when those ideas emanate from Japanese colleagues who are themselves language teaching professionals.

8.2.4 Tolerance of Error/Comprehensible Pronunciation Vs. Emphasis on Formal Correctness

The heavy emphasis placed upon reading, writing and formal correctness as a result of the predominance, still, of traditionally-based discrete point tests, effectively acts to *de*-emphasise pronunciation (commonly felt to be a potential threat to one's Japanese identity), while simultaneously promoting a less forgiving attitude towards error.

In the communicative approach, perfect pronunciation is not a goal of learning for reasons cited in Chapter 3. It does however need to be of a standard that enables the speaker to be understood, presumably with relative ease. Probably because it is not a priority given the traditional language teaching practices in Japan, and the fact that few Japanese will venture overseas for more than a short holiday, the pronunciation of a significant number of individuals does frequently fall below this standard. Whilst this might seem strange in light of the fact that the majority of Japanese are well versed in the phonetic alphabet, it becomes less so given that recognition of phonetic symbols in no way implies the ability to pronounce them correctly. Thus, although knowledge of the phonetic alphabet suggests evidence of an interest in pronunciation, this is rarely realised in the classroom beyond the teaching of the symbols - often by Japanese teachers who are themselves products of traditional teaching methods and consequently deficient in their phonological competence.

Error has to be accepted in CLT as an inevitable by-product of the effort to focus learners' attention on fluency and provide them with opportunities to negotiate meaning and develop the kinds of conversational strategies referred to above. In Japan, where language is still seen largely in structural rather than functional terms, the English language teacher sees it as an inherent part of his role to adopt a more rigorous attitude toward error. In doing so he not only feels he is responding to his learners' needs as defined by the traditional examinations they have ultimately to sit, but equally importantly, he is responding to the expectations of 'the system'. In other words, he is conscious of the fact that he has to be seen to be conforming to what is generally expected of him, and any perceptions in this regard are coloured by both his classroom behaviour as well as his students' examination results.

8.2.5 Fluency and Pragmatic Meaning Vs. Teacher-Fronted/Non-Interactive Classrooms, and Traditional Examinations

Finally, the need for CLT classrooms to reflect the emphasis given in the approach to fluency and pragmatic meaning is out of synch with conventional Japanese English language classroom behaviour for a number of reasons. Firstly, the practical realisation of an emphasis on fluency and pragmatic meaning requires a significant degree of learner centredness and learner autonomy in the classroom which in turn entail interaction - three features which we have noted to be in conflict with normal, very control-oriented classroom practices. Secondly, there is again the problem of justifying what are essentially oral-aural skills to teachers and institutions who see their responsibility as ensuring that as many of their students as possible succeed in passing examinations where such skills are generally speaking disregarded. To these teachers and institutions, the kind of social interaction activities described in Chapter 2 promise meagre returns as far as the results of such examinations are concerned, and by extension therefore, the all-important school/college/university reputation has little to gain also.

8.2.6 Summary and Conclusions

In summary, and leaving aside experiential/anecdotal evidence, there is good reason to believe that virtually all CLT principles would in some way create the possibility of tension with established behaviour patterns/practices of Japanese classrooms, were they to be implemented. It is time, therefore, to look at how revisions to the approach suggested in Chapters 3-5 and the consequent proposals for revised attitudes to fundamental issues in language teaching (Chapter 6) present the possibility of remaining faithful to fundamental precepts of the communicative approach whilst also accommodating those idiosyncrasies of the Japanese classroom context identified above. While it is unlikely there can ever be a *perfect* match between the context and pedagogy of language teaching, the point at issue is the importance and possibility of negotiating a practical compromise by critically examining ideas in language teaching, soundly understanding the context in which they are to be implemented, and developing an appreciation of the factors governing

implementation in order to create an effective and workable solution as effectively and smoothly as possible.

8.3 Resolutions: How a Rigorous Analysis of Ideas and Sensitivity to Context Serve as Keys to Compromise and Effective Implementation

8.3.1 Some Introductory Remarks

Suggestions as to how a reconciliation might be forged between conventional classroom behaviour in Japan and the principles and practices of CLT need to be prefaced by a few comments addressing the question of why, given the very traditional nature of English Language examinations and the weight afforded them, there is any need or justification for such a reconciliation.

To begin with, it is a fact that an increasing number of Japanese are wishing to enter foreign (generally American, British or Australian) educational institutions; a response, in part, to the lure of opportunity and the promise of quick success spoken of above. As part of the matriculation procedure these individuals are required to sit and reach required standards in English language examinations. For university study, these are typically the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) in the United States, and the CPE (Cambridge Proficiency Examination) in Great Britain. Such exams tend to focus as much on communicative skills as formal dexterity and, in the case of the CPE and FCE (First Certificate of English), incorporate an oral component in the form of an interview with a trained assessor.

Secondly, despite the considerable weight of tradition in Japan, there is nevertheless the earlier-mentioned perceptible change in English language teaching/testing - be it a slow and often ill-informed one - that suggests at least an attempt by some institutions to reflect pedagogically/evaluatively the *talk* of communication that has become so prevalent. This very gradual shift in stance is evident in the kinds of government-sponsored programmes referred to in Chapter 1 which encourage the use of communication with native speakers of English brought to Japan specifically for that purpose. There is also an increasing use of conversational textbooks, particularly in the more flexible private

schools and universities, and usually in conjunction with the traditional Mombusho prescribed textbooks. A growing number of entrance examinations are beginning to build an oral component of some kind into their assessment procedures, and in the case of an interview this is frequently administered by a native speaker - a fact that perhaps bears further witness to the Japanese lack of confidence in their own conversational skills, as well as to the desire (possibly) to distance themselves from such 'unconventional' practices.

Thirdly, many Japanese students of English are not required to sit exams, but need/wish to communicate for business or leisure purposes. That is, conversational skills are seen by many as prerequisite to successful commercial and political undertakings with other nations. As Japanese corporate interests continue to spread overseas, it is increasingly common for Japanese businessmen to live in English speaking countries. It is thus in their own best social and commercial interests that they acquire a functional competence in the language and attempt to integrate, at least partially, with the culture itself. Even within Japan, business with non-Japanese-speaking associates has to be able to proceed smoothly. Moreover, a good number of people choose to spend many hours increasing their English proficiency so as to have access to prized jobs such as air steward/hostess, pilot and tour guide, or simply in order to be able to converse with foreign residents living locally, or to access Western arts.

Finally, it might be argued - though rather less convincingly it must be said - that language is essentially communication and that therefore pedagogy ought to reflect this fact irrespective of the learner's/institution's agenda to successfully meet the challenge of entrance examinations.

8.3.2 Identifying Commonalities Between a Revised View of CLT and Conventional Behaviour/Attitudes in Japanese English Language Classrooms

It was proposed in Chapter 6 that by removing imported authenticity as a *necessary* facet of the communicative classroom, certain aspects of the teaching-learning process could, by implication and contrary to the general interpretation of CLT, consistently feature as legitimate aspects of the approach. As an important step to illustrating how a careful examination of ideas and context can bring about pedagogical compromise, let us look now at how these aspects appear to be suited to - and in some cases match

perfectly - the conventional behaviour/attitudes found in Japanese English language classrooms and described in the preceding chapter.

8.3.2.1 Writing and Metalanguage

It has been argued that metalanguage can be judged admissible in the communicative classroom on the basis that the learner needs to notice language if he is to learn from it and have opportunities to develop his systemic knowledge as a 'back-up' resource when there exists a deficit in his schematic knowledge. As a corollary of this argument, writing can also be seen to take on a potentially more important role than is generally accorded it in CLT (re. section 2.7), for it naturally encourages a focus on form yet within the context of a purposeful activity. Clearly, both a focus on metalanguage and a more rigorous adoption of writing activity are two pedagogical features very much in tune with current practices in Japan. Metalanguage dominates in response to pressure exerted by traditionally inclined examinations, while writing, although not regarded as a promoter of *conversational* proficiency, nevertheless features heavily as part and parcel of grammar-translation activity and the acquisition of formal or grammatical competence.

8.3.2.2 The First Language (Japanese), Grammar Translation and Contrastive Analysis

We have seen that the learner's L1 may be viewed positively as a resource that can be utilised by the learner to help negotiate meaning in situations where his schematic knowledge is incongruous with that of his native-speaker counterpart, and his L2 systemic knowledge is inadequate to make up the deficit. Once the L1 is admitted on these grounds, then both grammar-translation and contrastive analysis are also legitimised, the former on the basis that the process of comparison can provoke learning which then acts as a linguistic resource, and the latter according to the idea that not only will contrastive analysis naturally operate during the completion of grammar-translation exercises and during efforts to negotiate meaning, but also as a predictive tool which the teacher can use for reinforcement purposes or to pre-sensitise learners in the fashion suggested in 6.2.1.

As was noted above, use of the L1 is commonplace in language teaching/learning in Japan, typically featuring in teacher and textbook explanations of grammar, idiomatic expressions and lexis. It is, though, the closely related and historically most prevalent activity of grammar-translation which coincides most obviously with Japanese classroom practice.

8.2.3.3 The Learner's Own (Japanese) Culture

Drawing on the learner's own culture in the classroom was recommended in Chapter 6 as a way to help ensure - particularly in the early stages of learning where the learner's schematic knowledge of the L2 culture is not yet well enough developed - that he has access to familiar concepts and ideas; things that relate to his own reality and enable him to engage more fully and fluently with the target language. This, it was suggested, promotes the development of his systemic knowledge which in turn empowers him to negotiate meaning and broaden his schematic knowledge the result of which is to enhance his pragmatic use of the language.

There are an increasing number of textbooks (e.g. *Explain Yourself*) which present material geared specifically toward Japanese cultural traditions - and indeed many others - so as to engage the learner in this way. Some books present material contrastively and in doing so could be said to be giving students the best of both worlds. On the one hand those students are able to relate most easily to subject matter relating to their own experience and therefore 'free' to get to grips with the language; and on the other they have the advantage of being able to increase their schematic knowledge of the L2 culture. Moreover, they not only benefit in terms of the inherent interest involved in discovering the L2 culture, but also from the learning potential provided by the very process of comparing and contrasting.

It is reasonable to suppose that in the case of Japan these kinds of materials are likely to prove particularly successful given the strong sense of national identity and pride in their culture the Japanese people exhibit; and the concomitant lack of knowledge and understanding of things Western that is quite frequently evident. What is striking in this regard is that in many cases such books are either written or co-authored by Japanese teachers and often get into print courtesy of Japanese publishing

companies. Whilst many textbooks published in the West are clearly geared to the Japanese market, this tends to be reflected more in the way they deal with particular grammatical structures, phonological issues etc., rather than in the subject matter covered.

8.2.3.4 The Japanese English Language Teacher

Finally, it has been argued that the reintroduction of metalanguage and a focus on form reasserts a role for the non-native speaker teacher on the grounds that (i) he will typically be well positioned to impart systemic knowledge of the L2 as a result of his own English language learning experience, and (ii) in being 'a step removed' from the target language culture and more empathetic to the learners' predicament (especially if teacher and students share the same cultural background) he will be better able to ensure that learners encounter material they can authenticate, and better able to present it in a digestible way.

Not only are Japanese English teachers well versed in the formalities of the English language as a result of their own highly traditional language learning experience, but talk of a legitimate role for non-native speaker teachers sits very comfortably with a situation where (i) native speaker teachers of English are still very much in the minority, and (ii) many Japanese teachers - particularly those well informed about communicative methodology - feel insecure about their adequacy as non-native teachers. It seems likely that were Japanese teachers to feel a greater sense of self esteem and confidence that they have a clearly defined role to play in 'the new approach', then CLT would stand a better chance of becoming more widely and willingly adopted. The fact that for the most part the possibility - and even desirability - of compromise has barely been contemplated as a result of often hard line impositional attitudes driven by intuition and over-enthusiasm rather than analysis and measured judgement has, one suspects, frightened many teachers away from the approach.

8.3.3 Applications: 3 Examples

It is important to realise that while the kind of analytical approach expounded in this and previous chapters is crucial in that it clearly has the potential to bring together in a more harmonious and thus educationally

effective relationship contemporary insights into pedagogical practice and contextual idiosyncrasies, nevertheless if there is to be change for the better in the standard of language education in the community concerned, then there also needs to be some move toward accommodation on the part of the local establishment. In this vein Widdowson warns:

> Too much respect for existing tradition can easily be an excuse for inertia and the maintenance of a status quo which favours the powerful and the privileged. There is no advantage to be gained in putting up protective barriers against incoming ideas in order to conserve the integrity of traditional practices. But new ideas do need to be mediated effectively and appropriately, that is to say, evaluated for relevance by critical appraisal and application. And that is where teacher education comes in.
>
> (Widdowson 1993, p. 271)

What is being argued here is that such change *will* be more palatable if brought about, where possible, in concert with local conditions rather than in spite of them. The trick is to be maximally informed so as to be able to judge what is possible and desirable in the process of establishing compromise; and it is a trick that is to be valued more in traditional, less yielding cultures such as Japan where change does not come easy.

8.3.3.1 Developing an Appreciation of Discourse and Context

How, for example, given those considerations laid out above (7.6 & 7.7), might one convey to Japanese learners and develop in them an appreciation of the importance of discourse and context in communication? One possibility would be to capitalise on the disposition toward reading and writing typical of Japanese classrooms, *in addition to* providing less familiar opportunities for responding on-line to discourse demands during activities involving real, unpredictable communication. Thus, students could be presented with texts - or better still written dialogues - designed to capture the kinds of discoursal features typical of naturalistic communication. They might then be asked to identify and/or interpret discoursal features that arise in the text. This could pre-empt a formal explanation of how such features operate during both written and oral communication. Such explanations could be in Japanese, particularly in the earlier stages of learning, and the dialogues themselves could be made to centre around Japanese cultural themes. The patterns of discourse referred to in 3.3.1 might also be dealt with in a contrastive fashion thus

helping maintain the connection with the learners' own culture in addition to providing a means of learning; of moving from the known to the unknown.

8.3.3.2 Presenting the L2 Culture

Despite acknowledging a legitimate role for metalanguage in foreign language teaching/learning and recognising its obvious and convenient correspondence with Japanese teaching practice, it is clear from the interactive nature of the systemic-schematic dichotomy (discussed in Chapter 6) that for communicative competence to be achieved and the learner to engage pragmatically with the language, he needs to develop his understanding of the L2 culture and thus have exposure to content that provides insights into that culture. This could perhaps be achieved in two ways in Japan.

Firstly, given (i) the acceptability - particularly in the earlier stages of learning - of utilising the learner's own cultural knowledge, and (ii) the Japanese predisposition toward their own culture and protectiveness of their cultural identity, one approach might again be to present aspects of the L2 culture contrastively. This would on the one hand cater to the rather ethnocentric outlook common among Japanese learners, while on the other hand simultaneously using it as a basis on which to introduce the necessary insights into the target language culture. Certainly in the earlier stages of learning, any such contrastive approach could be realised through the kind of written exercises that are so familiar to these learners. Moreover, given what has been established as a legitimate, if limited, role for the target language, and taking into account the lack of confidence/ability in oral skills often exhibited among Japanese English teachers, it seems perfectly acceptable to present these cultural insights orally in Japanese. That is, Japanese can be used to discuss aspects of the L2 culture and thereby increase schematic knowledge just as Japanese culture can be drawn upon in the interests of more efficiently developing systemic knowledge. The only caveat is that there still need to be opportunities for learners to infer/be taught the pragmatics of the relationship between the two types of knowledge if communicative competence is to be achieved. Finally, the development of schematic knowledge could also be fostered through reading activities that incorporate content selected specifically for that purpose. Reading activity in general is commonplace in Japanese

language classrooms, and thus this particular activity would have the added advantage of 'local' credibility, or face validity.

The second and probably less desirable option for dealing with schematic knowledge might be to ignore it altogether in the classroom, focus solely on the acquisition and fluent accessing of systemic knowledge, and leave it to develop naturally as part of the learner's pragmatic competence if and when the learner finds himself in situations where he is exposed to it or that call for its application. Such situations may or may not involve interacting directly with the target language culture. They may, for example, arise from business demands in Japan, or simply through the reading of an English novel.

8.3.3.3 Promoting Learner Interaction

If learners are to achieve communicative competence, they need opportunities to interact with one another, and this scenario seems antithetical to the common practice of very controlled, teacher-fronted learning in Japan. In attempting to address this apparent mismatch, it seems only logical to take advantage of the Japanese cultural disposition towards co-operation and the group.

Although any kind of pair work or group work might be seen as a relinquishing of control by the teacher, this could perhaps be done in a way which is in keeping with other characteristics of classroom behaviour considered conventional or 'proper'. It might, for example, be introduced in a very controlled, highly structured fashion where activity targets are clearly spelt out to students and the kind of language behaviour required for completing tasks is largely 'pre-programmed', thus responding to the students' need for direction while also helping reduce any sense of their being overly individualistic and detracting from the authority of the teacher. As we have seen, such authority needs to be maintained in order that parental, institutional and hierarchical expectations are fulfilled. Of course, if strategic competence is to be adequately developed in the way described in Chapter 5 and classroom behaviour is not to be too reminiscent of the audiolingual era, then students need to be allowed room to adjust their language, ask for clarification etc., when the need arises, and this will tend to encroach more upon classroom conventions.

These examples are by no means intended as *comprehensive* accounts of how a reconciliation of teaching-learning theory and context might be

brought about, but merely as indications of the kind of flexibility that can arise from informed decision-making based upon an attitude of accommodation and compromise rather than imposition. They encapsulate a belief held by this writer, formulated over the foregoing chapters and expressed by Holliday in the following terms:

> ...rather than suggest culture-sensitivity as a new approach ...I wish to argue that the communicative approach already contains potentials for culture-sensitivity which can be enhanced and developed to suit any social situation surrounding any TESEP classroom.
>
> (Holliday 1994, p. 165)

The question now arises as to how, at the level of language teacher education, we can help ensure that individuals are most effectively empowered with this ability to strike an appropriate compromise between what they learn through careful scrutiny of the gamut of teaching methods and approaches available to them, and what they encounter in particular language teaching contexts.

Chapter 9

Fostering a New Teacher Attitude: The Challenge for Language Teacher Education

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9.1 Language Teacher Education Versus Language Teacher Training

A good deal has been made in recent years of the distinction between language teacher education (LTE) and language teacher training (LTT). It is, I suggest, a distinction that is crucial to understanding the motivation for and implications of the present discussion, and as such warrants examination. To this end, it is helpful to begin by looking at the way in a number of writers closely associated with LTE/LTT and whom I shall quote at some length, have articulated and shed light upon the distinction.

Richards and Nunan have stated that teacher training is:

> ...characterised by approaches that view teacher preparation as familiarising student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom,

while teacher education is:

> ...characterised by approaches that involve teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of decision making, and strategies for critical self-awareness and self-evaluation.
>
> (Richards and Nunan 1990, p. xi)

Day, in the same volume states:

> A successful programme in second language teacher education ...helps student teachers develop an integrated set of theories and belief systems that can provide them with a framework for effective teaching.
>
> (Day 1990, p. 44)

Commenting that the teacher training process may be subsumed under the superordinate process of teacher education, Larsen-Freeman (1983) makes the following more detailed comparison between the two (see

Figure 6), subsequently stating that educating is a process of preparing people to make informed choices which, she says, "is what teaching is all about".

The Training Process:	*The Educating Process:*
The training process is situation-oriented. Since the trainer can customise the training to the situation, finite objectives can be specified.	The educating process is individual-oriented. Objectives are more general and are stated in terms of developing an individual's skills so that he or she can adapt to and function in any situation.
The content of the training programme is matched to the finite objectives. The information is transmitted from the trainer to the trainees.	Students are educated to be independent learners: to have 'the capacity to generate their own learning as needed' (Harrison and Hopkins 1967: 439).
Trainees are expected to do as the trainer (or the acknowledged model) does. The emphasis is on obtaining results that conform as closely to the model as possible.	Students learn how to set objectives, define problems, generate hypotheses, gather information, make decisions, and assess outcomes. The emphasis is on the process, not the result.
Criteria for success can be specified. Measurement of these and therefore knowledge of the degree of the trainer's success is immediately attainable.	Since objectives are more open-ended, assessment is based on the progress students have made toward meeting the objectives. Success is more relative than absolute.

Larsen-Freeman's Distinction Between the Training and Educating Processes (1983, p. 265)

Figure 6

Peters (1973) elucidates upon the training/education distinction in rather more colourful terms as follows:

> ...a person could be a trained ballet-dancer or have mastered an eminently worthwhile skill, such as pottery-making, without being educated. What might be lacking is something to do with knowledge and understanding; for being educated demands more than being highly skilled. An educated man must also possess some body of knowledge and some kind of conceptual scheme to raise this above the level of a collection of disjointed facts. This implies some understanding of principles for the organisation of facts.
>
> (Peters 1973, p. 18)

The "conceptual scheme" he speaks of, Peters elsewhere refers to as an "underlying rationale". Widdowson (1983) picks up on Peters' distinction and takes things a step further by effectively suggesting that such a rationale is prerequisite to the kind of creativity necessary to solving pedagogical 'problems', and which is a fundamental aspect of what it means to be an educated teacher. Training, he states:

> ...seeks to impose a *conformity* to certain established patterns of knowledge and behaviour, usually in order to carry out a set of clearly defined tasks, where the problem is recognizably a token of a formula type. Education, however, seeks to provide for *creativity* whereby what is learned is a set of schemata and procedures for adopting them to cope with problems which do not have a ready-made formulaic solution.
>
> (Widdowson 1983, p. 19)

More recently, and calling upon the idea of parameter setting (more commonly referred to within the context of the universal grammar hypothesis) Widdowson has restated the distinction thus:

> Training is the process of preparing people to cope with problems which can be more or less predicted in advance: Its function therefore is to provide a set of routines, techniques, and tactics which can be applied as the occasion requires. It is in this sense formulaic and solution-oriented. Education, on the other hand, is the process of preparing people to deal with the unpredictable: Its function is to develop a more general problem-solving capacity in the form of principles and strategies with reference to which problems can be defined so as to make them amenable to subsequent solution. In this sense it is problem-oriented. Whereas, in education, we might say, we are concerned with general conceptual parameters, in training we are concerned with how these parameters might be set to match the requirements of practical situations.
>
> (Widdowson 1993, p. 268)

In effect, this final exposition serves quite satisfactorily as a broad synthetic statement and summary of most, if not all the views expressed above.

In light of these various articulations, we can say that LTE programmes seek, in principle at least, to create autonomous practitioners; teachers who are *empowered* to assess and make informed pedagogical choices as they see fit according to the particular teaching-learning situation with which they are confronted. In order to do this those individuals need to be equipped with certain attitudinal, theoretical, experiential and cognitive tools; tools which enable them to effectively merge theory with practice and make judicious and context-specific decisions in the process of arriving at a plan of action that will maximally ensure an acceptable learning curve is achieved among their students. It is in liberating the teacher by providing him with and encouraging the use of these tools that most obviously sets LTE apart from LTT which has tended in the past to concern itself more with prescriptive, formulaic solutions to teaching situations, each of which is inevitably idiosyncratic and distinctive in nature. In this regard, Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990) state, quoting Fanselow and Light (1977), that there is little in the way of convincing research evidence to suggest that there is a "best" way to teach, and that "...although there are creative and effective ways to teach..there is little proof that any one way of teaching is better in all settings than another" (1990, p. 16). Just as importantly, they go on to say:

> ...prescription keeps the responsibility for decision making with the teacher educator, thus lessening the likelihood that student teachers are being prepared to assume the responsibilities for what goes on in their classrooms. To assure that student teachers are being prepared to enter the real world of teaching ...teacher educators need to shift responsibility for decision making to class- room teachers, providing them with investigative skills and methodology for making decisions about what and how to teach.
>
> (Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy 1990, p. 16)

Gaudert echoes these sentiments when she asks:

> If we stopped and looked at our own teacher preparation programmes, would we find that it allows student teachers to develop, or would we find that it forces them into a mould which we have created for them?
>
> (Gaudert 1994, p. 86)

Jarvis (1976) implies that programmes have, by and large, *not* allowed for such student-teacher development when he observes that teacher educators need to:

> develop the appropriate mental set in the teacher - that of being a knowledgeable decision-maker who is also accountable, rewardable and codifiable. His present disposition appears to be that of receiver of techniques, who, at most, pragmatically accepts or rejects them. He seems to view his behaviour merely in these dichotomous terms rather than as a part of a complex of implications. He says, "I tried that once and it didn't work." Rarely does he search for reasons why. That has not been part of his perceptions of his own role.
>
> (Jarvis 1976, p. 178)

In essence, LTE takes - or ought to take - as its point of departure the realisation that being an effective teacher involves substantially more than having access to a repertoire of methods and techniques, be they sanctioned by the existence of voluminous amounts of applied linguistics literature as well as the commercial products of publishing companies. And it is also more than the ability merely to recite the principles (and their rationale) that guide the various approaches and methods, and the techniques that realise them. It has to do with the processes of selection and matching according to context of operation, and these in turn have to do with the attitudinal, theoretical, experiential and cognitive tools referred to earlier and which now demand clarification.

9.2 What Makes for an Informed Autonomy?

It should be clear from this brief exposition that the call, made in foregoing chapters, for more reflective, critical and autonomous teachers who are able to 'weigh up' the constraints of context of operation and in response make measured and responsible decisions in effectively and appropriately moulding and adjusting pedagogical practices accordingly, relates (as was observed at the close of Chapter 8) very much to sphere of LTE. The questions that now arise, however, and which will provide the focus for the remainder of the present chapter are:

(a) What kind of skills and knowledge does such informed or 'guided' autonomy presuppose?
(b) How might these be promoted in LTE programmes?

With regard to the first of these two questions, five distinct areas of competence can be identified. These are:

- *Theoretico-analytic knowledge*
- *Experiential knowledge*
- *Knowledge of context*
- *A developed sense of self-confidence and initiative*
- *The ability to synthesise theoretico-analytic, experiential and contextual knowledge (elements 1-3) using those attitudinal traits that make up element 4.*

9.2.1 Theoretico-Analytic Knowledge

Here the emphasis is less on knowledge of the language itself and a hands-on understanding of how different ideas and approaches work in the classroom - typically the stuff of teacher training programmes - and more on the wherewithal to analyse and perform a critical appraisal of those ideas.

Autonomy by no means implies a disregard for the principles and practices of language teaching that appear in the literature, but rather a disciplined approach to them. There needs to be a knowledge of such principles that goes beyond a passive acceptance of the received wisdom, and which is, instead, the product of a careful, detailed analysis and critical appraisal of the kind referred to in 6.7. This is what is meant by an *informed* autonomy. The acquisition of this type of knowledge (which in turn provides the theoretical basis for decision-making according to teaching-learning context) requires that at least two conditions be fulfilled. Firstly, there needs to be an understanding of the theoretical provenance or original conceptual location of the ideas in question. Only once this is established can those ideas themselves be fully understood. This is made clear if one looks back at communicative language teaching. It is impossible to appreciate fully the significance of the principles of CLT without first becoming informed of communicative competence theory, and indeed of the theoretical forces that led to its emergence. In terms of the framework proposed in Chapter 2, one needs to be able to see how the levels of theoretical impetus and underlying principles relate to each other. Failure to do so results in a perception of those principles as ideas in isolation and lacking any rationale. And ideas in isolation have little of

consequence to recommend them, for ultimately their value depends in large part upon how well they are seen to fit into or 'connect up' with the broader scheme of things.

The second condition that needs to be fulfilled is the evaluation of ideas and schemes of thought with respect to their validity, utility and internal consistency (re. Chapters 3, 4 & 5). Before ideas are applied in the classroom, teachers need to be aware of any conceptual and practical weaknesses that are intrinsic to those ideas. The kinds of inconsistencies highlighted in section 3.1, for example, need to be identified and reconciled in the teacher's mind, even if such reconciliation does not involve a solution but simply recognition of where the problem lies and where it stems from. Only once the teacher is privy to such knowledge is he in a position to sensibly select, combine and apply methods, techniques and materials. Awareness, as Larsen-Freeman observes, is the key to making informed choices (1983, p. 266).

In the case of both the above conditions, the bottom line is that in order to decide if and how ideas can be moulded, edited and adapted to particular teaching-learning situations, it is first necessary to establish the location and nature of any inherent inconsistencies as well as the type of relationship (analytical or otherwise) existing between their theoretical impetus, emergent underlying principles and pedagogical application (see 2.2). This provides the teacher with parameters necessary to defining his flexibility in responding to those situations and effectively integrating and co-ordinating different ideas during the process.

9.2.2 Experiential Knowledge

Experiential knowledge is self-explanatory and refers to the invaluable knowledge resource a seasoned teacher builds up by virtue of the hours he has spent in the classroom. It is the wisdom borne of years of experimentation, of coping with/adjusting to the infinitely varied sets of characteristics each and every classroom situation presents; as such, it cannot be replaced by any number of hours spent developing an academic grasp of the language teaching enterprise. Prabhu, who sees such knowledge as being manifested in a teacher's "feel for learning", describes it thus:

> It is subjective, inexplicit, perhaps unavailable for explicit formulation, less than certain at any given point and generally in

an indeterminate state. But that does not mean that it does not exist or operate. It is a form of practitioner's knowledge, as distinct from specialist's knowledge, comparable to what one finds in medical practice. A medical practitioner is, at one level, applying the specialist knowledge received in his or her training, doing the diagnosis and treatment as suggested by it, At another level, however, a medical practitioner develops as a result of recurrent treatment of patients over a length of time, something of an intuitive sense for different ailments and conditions of ill-health, which goes beyond or diverges from specialist knowledge but is real enough in its operation and of value in the treatment of patients.

(Prabhu 1995, pp. 63-64)

As Prabhu's description makes plain, experiential knowledge is closely allied with the notion of teacher intuition. The greater a teacher's classroom experience, the more developed will be his sense of intuition and the greater faith he will place in his instincts about which practices are likely to be most effective in what situations.

9.2.2.1 The Role of Intuition

Baldwin has defined intuition as "...the making of good guesses in situations where one has neither an answer nor an algorithm for obtaining it" (1966, p. 84). Any experienced teacher knows that the ability to make such guesses cannot be learnt *except* in the classroom and over time, and it is in large part this knowledge that highlights for him the fallaciousness of the all too commonly harboured view, such anathema to professional teachers at large, that if you can speak the language then you are qualified to teach it. Justification for the indignation with which such professionals view this attitude becomes evident - often strikingly so - in the face of two not uncommon scenarios.

The first is where the layman attempts to communicate with a foreigner of limited proficiency and often simply adopts the strategies of speaking louder and/or rephrasing, often in language which the experienced teacher immediately recognises as inherently complex and beyond the receiver's capacity to process. It is not necessarily that he ultimately fails in his attempts to communicate, merely that he is highly inefficient in the way he achieves his purpose where the experienced teacher would be more elegant due to his ability to better tune his input to the foreigner's level of proficiency.

The second scenario - one that many an experienced teacher will recall with a wry smile - is where the recently trained teacher, full of enthusiasm and faith in the approaches, methods and techniques he has become *academically* familiar with, lacks 'finesse' in the way he applies them in the classroom context. That is, he fails to take adequate account of context and does not feel at liberty to modify and adjust 'textbook practices' according to the teaching situation in which he finds himself.

In an article written in 1983, Brown suggests that teachers-in-training tend not to consider and fully appreciate the role of intuition in determining teaching strategy. Instead, they "...want analytical answers. They often demand a finely tuned program that maps all the possible pathways to successful teaching. They want definitions, rules, absolutes" (Brown 1983, p. 54). Echoing closely the well documented distinction in cognition and teaching between declarative and procedural knowledge (Anderson 1983, 1985), he goes on to argue that intuition forms an "essential component of our intellectual endeavour", and thus also of teacher education programmes, for "...it is the complementation of intuition (procedural knowledge) and analysis (declarative knowledge) that enables us to make good decisions, to solve problems, and to categorise the world around us" (my parenthetic inserts). Drawing upon Elbow's (1973) characterisation this "complementation" in terms of two 'games', Brown explains:

> The doubting game (analysis) is a game of propositions, of seeking error, of logic, a game of extricating yourself from assertions. The believing game (intuition) is a game of involvement, of experience, of indirection, in which you recognise the relativity of truth and believe assertions. Intellectuality, however, is a balance of playing both the doubting game and the believing game.
>
> (Brown ibid., p. 55; my parenthetical insertions)

In more everyday parlance, analytical thinkers tend to be more systematic and excel at planning and organisation, whereas intuitive thinkers cope well with what is elusive, fluid and difficult to define, often responding in the process to hunches or gut feelings in attempting solutions. It is not difficult to see how experience, which 'guides' such hunches, lies at the heart of intuitive ability. The fact is, as Brown notes, that in language teaching we are continually faced with problems or situations which have no ready analysis and no available language or metalanguage "...to capture the essence of why a particular decision was made" (ibid. p. 55). It is at such

times that the value of intuition is most apparent. In the words of Baldwin, "The person who refuses to use his intuition ...is cutting himself off from one of his own abilities" (ibid. p. 87). It is, as Brown says, "...this danger that perhaps underlies the demand for training intuition".

9.2.3 Contextual Knowledge

> Educational practices that seem to work in one setting are frequently transplanted to a foreign context in the hope that they will produce favourable results there also. Especially in modern-day English language teaching ...teachers and ideas travel quickly from one country to another ...In a foreign socio-cultural matrix, a variety of factors that are often ignored in ...domestic settings become critical, and the process of implementing an innovation becomes much more complex.
>
> (Henrichsen 1989, p. 4)

The significance of contextual knowledge was very much the subject of Chapters 7 and 8. As such, it requires little in the way of expansion here. What is clear, however, is that in planning and implementing language courses consideration must go beyond simply the theoretical credibility of ideas and their current status within the profession, to include the *suitability* of those ideas in relation to the particular educational and socio-cultural context for which they are intended. This will help avoid what Holliday (1994) refers to as "tissue rejection" - the shunning of ideas discordant with local customs.

Prerequisite to any such assessment of suitability is the wherewithal to analyse context, something which in turn demands the existence of certain parameters according to which that analysis may proceed in a structured or guided fashion, thereby helping ensure the provision of pertinent information that may contribute to shaping an effective pedagogy. These "parameters" are widely interpreted at a micro-level, i.e. as having to do primarily with learner characteristics and the physical and economic constraints governing classroom practice. Particularly in the case of the EFL situation, this interpretation needs to be widened to accommodate broader considerations often associated with the higher level decision-making of language planning, and mistakenly perceived by some teachers/teacher educators to be far removed from - even irrelevant to - the everyday concerns of the classroom and thus the interests of LTE programmes.

While, undoubtedly, there needs to be sensitivity in teachers' decision-making to learner characteristics as well as to physical and economic realities, in order to fully understand these and therefore work *with* them in forming the most effective compromises of the kind exemplified in Chapter 8, there needs also to be an understanding of broader issues; of what Stern and Strevens refer to as "administrative and political constraints" and the "institutional aspects of language teaching" (1983, pp. 3-4) for example. In the same way that a full appreciation of the significance of those principles governing a particular type of methodology requires an understanding of the theoretical ethos that gave birth to them, so the immediate classroom situation can only be fully understood and thus maximally capitalised on or manipulated if the higher order forces that help shape that context are also appreciated and taken into account by teachers/syllabus designers. I refer in particular to those factors governing the diffusion of innovations in language teaching. These constitute important guiding "parameters" of the kind suggested, and therefore warrant the attention of LTE programmes. In discussing the importance of such factors, Henrichsen (1989) states:

> If lack of success comes from lack of understanding, then it follows that greater understanding of the factors involved will lead to more control and increased success...Greater knowledge of the factors that affect the change process will result in an enlarged ability to achieve reforms, a decrease in wasted time, and less disillusionment.
>
> (Henrichsen 1989, p. 9)

He goes on to quote Flenley who, in referring to the Japanese context, reported that:

> Success or failure turned on how well the constraints (political, administrative, socio-cultural etc.) had been negotiated; if innovations are to succeed, they cannot be ignored.
>
> (Flenley 1988, quoted from Henrichsen ibid. p. 9; my parenthetic insert)

An informed, potent and responsible teacher needs to be aware of the forces governing how ideas are received and their potential to influence at the classroom level, for heightened awareness brings with it an increased potential to control, not only in the sense of working more effectively within recognised constraints, but also by opening up the possibility of influencing higher level managerial/administrative and even (though less feasibly perhaps) political decisions that may then filter back down to

the classroom and alter the dynamics there. Recognition of this potential to influence tacitly acknowledges the importance (expressed in 8.3.3) of avoiding "inertia and the maintenance of a status quo which favours the powerful and the privileged".

9.2.4 A Developed Sense of Self-Confidence and Initiative

It would appear to follow that if there are no formulaic, universally applicable pedagogical solutions to particular teaching/learning situations all of which are distinctive, then teachers need to be able themselves to select whichever methods and techniques they deem appropriate in responding effectively. Brumfit (1983) appears to be driving at this when he states that:

> ...no good teacher, however predictable and homogeneous the group of potential students, will be able to treat them as being the same as any previous group, for general specifications are always too crude to predict the needs and wants of fresh learners. For all groups, then, there is a case to be made for interpretative activity deriving from the strategies adopted in class by teachers, experienced and inexperienced.
>
> (Brumfit 1983, p. 69)

Such "interpretative activity" involves teachers having the confidence and initiative to draw on their intuitions and instincts in evaluating previous teaching experience as a basis for a present course of action. Equally, it involves the application of similar attitudinal traits in the appraisal, selection and editing of ideas (theoretico-analytic knowledge). By breaking away from textbook accounts of the various methods and techniques and exhibiting a willingness to experiment, the teacher not only sees these ideas for what they are, but also considerably extends his leeway in establishing a pedagogical compromise, or match, between theory and the immediate classroom situation; between ideas and their context of application.

As an important part of this process of establishing compromise, the interaction between experiential knowledge (or intuition) about teaching/learning and theoretico-analytic knowledge, itself forces the teacher to take on a more critical, analytical attitude to ideas, for, as Prabhu observes:

> ...when an intuitive sense has arisen and is operative, it can be expected to interact continually with the ideational component of pedagogy, influencing it in various ways, attaching different values to alternative conceptualizations or to different parts of a given conceptualization, thus selecting, rejecting, or reshaping the concepts concerned.
>
> (Prabhu 1995, p. 64)

The importance of this freedom to assess and reassess ideas in the light of insight gained via experience appears to receive further acknowledgement from Brumfit in the following extract taken from an article appearing in the same volume:

> Whatever teachers are able to learn from research, from theory, and from interested outsiders, will be valuable to them but will require reinterpretation in the light of their personal professional experience. To take that away from them is to insist that teaching is simply a technology, in which people carry out somebody else's agenda and are merely cogs in the system.
>
> (Brumfit 1995, p. 35)

9.2.5 The Ability to Synthesise Knowledge Types in Selecting Strategies and Creating Pedagogical Solutions

Having the requisite theoretico-analytic, experiential and contextual knowledge, as well as the attitudinal set necessary to ensuring that such knowledge is taken advantage of and forms the basis of creative and adaptive teaching practice, does not in itself provide a guarantee of *success* in teaching, crucial though such resources are. Ultimately, unless, in the process of shaping his pedagogy, the teacher is endowed with the cognitive means required to unify information provided by these resources, they remain practically impotent, and the teacher becomes rather akin to the musician who knows everything there is to know about musical notation, guitar fretboards, picking techniques etc., yet is unable to co-ordinate that information in order to play the instrument with any degree of proficiency. To use Widdowson's term (1993), in order to successfully "mediate" between academic knowledge and pedagogic strategy, the teacher needs to have at his disposal the means of *synthesising* the various knowledge types identified above, of carefully and consciously blending them together in orchestrating learning. Only when he has such means available to him is he able to fully capitalise on the kind of creativity and

flexibility promoted by the attitude to ideas and situations discussed in 9.2.4.

The importance of being able to synthesise in this fashion is forcefully conveyed by Eisner who argues:

> ...the idea that the skills of teaching can be treated as discrete elements and then aggregated to form a whole reflects a fundamental misconception of what it means to be skilled in teaching. What teaching requires is the ability to recognise dynamic patterns, to grasp their meaning, and the ingenuity to invent ways to respond to them. It requires the ability to both lose oneself in the act and at the same time maintain a subsidiary awareness of what one is doing. Simply possessing a set of discrete skills ensures nothing.
>
> (Eisner 1983, p. 9; quoted from Altman 1983, p. 22)

Altman himself makes Eisner's point rather more succinctly when he states that "The 'whole' of language teaching equals more than the sum of the discrete technical skills which teachers learn in methods courses" (1983, p. 22). It is the teacher's cognitive powers of synthesis that determine the agility and effectiveness with which he manages to transform those discrete technical skills, insights and observations into the "whole".

9.3 Developing Informed Autonomy in Student Teachers: Some Practical Suggestions for LTE Programmes

Ellis (1990) suggests that teacher preparation practices can be divided into two categories, *experiential* and *awareness-raising*. He describes these two categories in the following terms:

> Experiential practices involve the student teacher in actual teaching. This can occur through "teaching practice", where the student teachers are required to teach actual students in real classrooms, or in "simulated" practice, as when the student teachers engage in peer teaching. Awareness-raising practices are intended to develop the student teacher's conscious understanding of the principles underlying second language teaching and/or the practical techniques that teachers can use in different kinds of lessons.
>
> (Ellis 1990, pp. 26-27)

Although Ellis appears to be collapsing language teacher training and language teacher education, the two categories he identifies seem to be applicable to the language teacher education activity types with which, I

suggest, we are particularly concerned here. There are at least seven broad such activity types that can play a useful role in the development of those skills/knowledge resources identified above as prerequisite to the kind of informed autonomy that needs to characterise the behaviour of the truly potent and effective language teacher. These are:

- The analysis of language teacher texts (awareness-raising)
- The teaching practicum (experiential/awareness-raising)
- Familiarisation with principles governing the diffusion of innovations in language teaching (awareness-raising)
- Syllabus design/implementation strategies (awareness-raising)
- Self/teacher-observation and classroom research (experiential/awareness-raising)
- General discussion and debate (awareness-raising)
- Conference attendance (awareness-raising)

Although in themselves these activities represent nothing particularly original, featuring as they do in both the literature and, to varying degrees, LTE programmes, what is important for present purposes is that they are seen to emerge from a rationale of the kind outlined in foregoing chapters, and interpreted in a way that is conducive to the development of autonomous teachers. Frequently, activities of this sort are designed in such a way that their primary purpose is to develop an operational understanding of language teaching rather than a reflective one designed ultimately to help the student teacher skilfully merge theory with practice according to context. That is, they serve essentially as facilitators of the teacher *training* process, not teacher education. For example, item one, *analysis of language teacher texts*, is often seen as involving little more than the fostering of an appreciation of a particular method; its originator, the role it assigns the teacher/learner, the role of the first language etc. (see Larsen-Freeman 1987 for an example of the kind of text which is typically used in this approach). Student teachers are not encouraged to look more penetratingly into the theories of language/learning (where they exist) that spawned the approach, and the soundness of its central principles. While an operational understanding of methods may be important, it is not sufficient if student teachers are to develop the kind of sensitivity necessary to establishing good critical skills, and apply those ideas successfully.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on how the six above activity types can be utilised to promote the kind of reflective, selective and matching procedure referred to earlier and underlying the production of an effective and appropriate pedagogy.

9.3.1 The Analysis of Language Teacher Texts

Language teacher texts is intentionally broad in its implications and refers to the following:

- Language teacher education/training materials designed specifically with the intention of informing pre- and/or in-service student teachers of bygone and current ideas on language teaching theory and practice.
- Language teaching textbooks (both student and teacher editions).
- Journal articles.

The kinds of activities that these text types can generate and which can in turn help increase the student teacher's theoretico-analytic knowledge as defined above (section 9.2.1) are potentially many and various. Among them are:

9.3.1.1 Performing Critical Discourse Analyses on Selected Texts

This would involve the student teacher (ST) scrutinising texts in order to ascertain, for example, the author's theoretical agenda where this is not made explicit, and providing justification for his conclusions in this regard. Where the agenda is made known, as in the case of many language teaching textbooks which clearly state (as part of the sales pitch) the theoretical orientation of the book, the ST could be required to analyse the *way* in which that approach has been realised. That is, he would need to see whether and how those principles informing the approach the author(s) claim to have adopted are actually faithfully represented in the book; whether any aspects of the book contradict those principles, if and why certain aspects of the approach are excluded and those of other approaches/theoretical orientations included, and whether there are any underlying contradictions in the amalgam. In order for him to do these things successfully, the ST needs to acquire adequate insight into approaches and their theoretical provenance as well as a sense of

judgement as to the considerations and constraints governing their practical realisation.

In the case of LTE textbooks, and indeed professional articles, a similar process of deconstruction could be applied; and again, before the ST is able to further hone his critical/analytical skills through engaging in this process, he first needs to theoretically 'locate' within the broader scheme of things the ideas he is presented with during his reading.

By investing time in the process of critical discourse analysis, the ST becomes better able to evaluate ideas for what they are and develops the capacity - subsequently exploitable during planning and teaching - to determine the potential relevance/irrelevance and desirability/ undesirability of ideas as and when he comes into contact with them. This knowledge enables him to make measured, informed and appropriate pedagogical decisions.

9.3.1.2 Analysing Schemes of Thought Featured in the Literature

Although an activity closely related to 9.3.1.1, this differs in that the main emphasis is not so much on identifying the author's agenda during the process of scrutinising ideas, but more on establishing the soundness of those ideas themselves. This means evaluating them in terms of their validity, utility and internal consistency - much as CLT was evaluated in Chapters 3-5.

9.3.1.3 Performing Contrastive Analyses on Different Texts

This is very much an awareness-raising activity and would involve, for example, observing how a series of different accounts in the literature perceive like ideas or phenomena, and trying to establish the point at which those accounts digress, as well as possible reasons for any differences of interpretation that emerge from the analysis.

A similar approach could also be taken to terminology (re. sections 2.4 & 4.5). In this case STs might be asked to ascertain whether or not (and if so how) like terminology differs in its interpretation (i) between different writers, and (ii) from the original source. They could further be asked to suggest *why* any shifts of interpretation have taken place, with particular attention being paid once more to each writer's own theoretical agenda or perspective, and the impulse to skew ideas accordingly.

In addition to expanding the ST's theoretico-analytic knowledge and thus providing him with the 'hardware' necessary for informed reflection and decision-making, each of the above three activities also plays a role in developing his self-confidence and initiative; that is, the attitudes (or 'software') that empower him to take full advantage of that knowledge. The more practised and adept he is at looking enquiringly at ideas, the more faith he will have in his own critical perceptions.

It is not difficult to imagine the form these analytical activities might take. They could be presented as worksheets to be completed by the student, or as subject matter for classroom discussion and debate. Either way, the ST would be involved in a similar process.

9.3.2 The Teaching Practicum

It could, with some justification, be argued that the teaching practicum suffers from certain limitations. On the one hand, it can provide only a minimal degree of teaching experience relative to what a 'competent' and effective teacher ideally needs; and on the other, it cannot be truly authentic so long as it is (i) viewed as part of the education/training process, (ii) involves the ST educator/trainer being present in the classroom (and thus potentially altering teacher and student behaviour, suffocating any ST inclination to explore his ideas and intuitions, be creative and experiment etc.), and (iii) constitutes a basis for assessment of the student's performance on the programme as a whole.

Nevertheless, the practicum remains a useful tool for the teacher educator. Most importantly - especially for the novice teacher - it provides a flavour of 'the teaching experience', and a means through which the ST can acquire first-hand an appreciation of the gap which so often exists between theory, its realisation in ELT textbooks, and classroom practice. In perceiving this gap, the ST is taking an important step in realising the need to act as a mediator of ideas and create pragmatic solutions through applying the kinds of skills and knowledge outlined in section 9.2. He is encouraged away from the perception of ideas and their textbook manifestation as absolute and universally applicable paragons of correctness to be championed whatever the pedagogical circumstances, toward a more realistic attitude which espouses the virtues of ad-libbing, adjustment and modification. He becomes, one might say, more *sensitised* to the whole issue of informed autonomy, and thus the teaching

practicum in effect reinforces the relevance and importance of the kinds of LTE activities described in this present section.

The practicum provides an opportunity not merely to acquire an appreciation of the relationship between theory and practice, but also to gain (admittedly limited) experience in practically responding to and bridging any gap that exists between the two through drawing upon and synthesising (in the sense described above) the skills and knowledge the ST is, hopefully, in the process of developing/acquiring. Whilst, as we have noted, the practicum, by virtue of its very nature may restrain his approach in so responding, and the degree of any experience gained through it is necessarily limited, nevertheless the insight it promises to provide in terms of the real classroom currency of ideas met during the individual's theoretical (or academic) wanderings, represents a substantial and important benefit and asset that ought to help endow him with a greater sense of realism in his quest for informed autonomy.

Finally, along with useful technological aids such as audio and video recorders, an experienced practicum supervisor sympathetic to the need for reflective and autonomous teachers, is a crucial element of the practicum if it is to serve as a means of putting the ST in touch with the need and potential to break way from a clichéd, pre-packaged or formulaic response to teaching-learning situations in favour of a more considered, eclectic, and synthetic one. By reviewing video footage of a class alongside a ST, the supervisor can, for example, point out instances where the 'textbook application' of a particular idea is ineffectual or produces an undesirable or unexpected response in the learners despite its apparently flawless delivery. He might ask/discuss with the ST where and why things went wrong or not according to plan, and encourage him to suggest modifications to the approach or technique which, though possibly a divergence from the original idea or a hybrid of different ideas, would nevertheless appear to offer the hope of an effective reconciliation. Such a reflective procedure would likely involve picking up on inherent weaknesses of the kind that are the focus of the analysis of language teacher texts, and in this respect the two types of activity could have a mutually reinforcing effect. What is of central importance to the overall process, though, is what Kwo (1994, p. 125) describes as a denial by the supervisor of "the positions of the apprentice-master and the lecturing teacher-trainer", and the willingness to adopt instead a new role that encourages "a climate of collegial rapport and a spirit of inquiry". In this

context, learning ensues in the kind of resourceful, more active mode that promotes autonomy, and which lecturing or reading is hard-pressed to provide.

9.3.3 Familiarisation with Principles Governing the Diffusion of Innovations in Language Teaching

The gap that tends to exist between theory and practice in language teaching has, in a somewhat broader context, been referred to by Rogers and Shoemaker as the "implementation gap". They state:

> Our activities in education, agriculture, medicine, industry, and the like are often without the benefit of the most current research knowledge. The gap between what is known and what is effectively put to use needs to be closed. To bridge this gap we must understand how new ideas spread from their source to potential receivers and understand the factors affecting the adoption of such innovations.
>
> (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971; quoted from Henrichsen 1989, p. 9)

Henrichsen himself rightly observes that:

> Innovators commonly promote change in ELT practices around the globe in virtual ignorance of the contexts into which they would introduce change and of the process of change and the factors it involves...The idea that the successful spread of a method depends heavily on how its promoters deal with a variety of social, cultural, and political factors is rarely considered in ELT circles.
>
> (Henrichsen 1989, pp. 6-7)

It is, as Henrichsen points out, this lack of awareness of implementation factors governing the fortunes of different methods that prompted Richards (1984) to speak of the "secret life of methods". It has been argued (above) that the informed, and thus liberated and effective teacher needs to be made privy to these secrets if he is to operate efficiently.

Designed as a basis for his retrospective analysis and assessment of the work of the English Language Exploratory Committee in Japan between 1956 and 1968, Henrichsen (ibid.) provides a taxonomy of factors which determine the extent to which new ideas are embraced by the host 'community' (see Figure 7). These might be said to constitute "parameters" of the kind spoken of earlier, and whilst most of them are self-explanatory, one or two in particular bear elucidation. The *resource system*, for example, refers to that system which is in place to promote an innovation and which thus affects the course and success of implementation efforts. *Inter-*

elemental factors are those factors that exist between rather than within the four elements specified in the taxonomy: Compatibility refers to the degree of fit between either the resource system and the intended-user system, or the innovation and its intended users. Linkage is "the number, variety, and mutuality of contacts between the resource system and the user system" (Havelock 1969, pp. 20-21). The greater the connectivity here, the weightier the support network. A teaching idea being taken up by a respected local journal is a scenario that illustrates the potential significance of linkage. Reward has to do with the system of rewards (or lack of the same) that serve to positively reinforce the user system that adopts the new idea or innovation. Henrichsen suggests these rewards may take various forms including profitability, recognition by colleagues and satisfaction in creating something that works. Proximity refers to "the nearness in time, place and context of the resource and user systems and their familiarity, similarity and recency" (Henrichsen ibid., p. 94), all of which can be powerful predictors of utilisation of an innovation. Finally, Synergism is "the number, variety, frequency, and persistence of forces that can be mobilized to produce a knowledge utilization effect" (Havelock ibid., p. 20).

Within the Innovation Itself	Within the Resource System	Within the Intended-User System	Inter-Elemental
Originality	Capacity	Geographic Location	Compatibility
Complexity	Structure	Centralization of Power and Administration	Linkage
Explicitness	Openness	Size of the Adopting Unit	Reward
Relative Advantage	Harmony	Communication Structure	Proximity
Trialability		Group Orientation and Tolerance of Deviancy	Synergism
Observability		Openness	
Status		Teacher Factors	
Practicality		Learner Factors	
Flexibility/ Adaptability		Capacities	
Primacy		Educational Philosophy	
Form		Examinations	

Factors that Hinder/Facilitate **Change (Henrichsen 1989, p. 83)**

Figure 7

Similar - though generally less comprehensive - taxonomies and/or statements stressing their importance have been proposed by other writers often in relation to particular teaching-learning contexts with which they are familiar. Markee (1986a, 1986b), for example, identifies cultural, ideological, historical, political, economic, administrative, institutional and sociolinguistic factors affecting the implementation of a project in the Sudan. Bowers (1980, 1987), Holliday and Cooke (1982), and Swales (1980,

1989) have likewise expressed recognition of the significance of such factors; a significance partially captured in Markee's statement that

> the adoption of a diffusion of innovations perspective should be regarded by practitioners as crucial to the development of the field of language teaching.
>
> (Markee 1993, p. 229)

The question which naturally arises from comprehensive taxonomies such as Henrichsen's is how to present the information they yield in a way that is accessible, meaningful and thus utilizable by STs. Language teacher educators need to make STs aware of how factors governing the diffusion of ideas contrive to affect, directly or indirectly, the everyday decisions of syllabus designers and classroom practitioners; how, rather than existing in the theoretical stratosphere as a practical irrelevance, the reality of those factors lies (or ought to lie) very much at the heart of the teacher's decision-making. To return to the map analogy, they function as co-ordinates which set much needed guidelines the autonomous teacher ought to see as necessary and helpful when plotting the most appropriate and efficacious pedagogical path.

At the risk of sounding obvious and mundane, STs should be encouraged to read literature (e.g. Henrichsen, ibid.; Richards' *'The Secret Life of Methods'* - TESOL Quarterly, 1984 - ; Valdes' *Culture Bound*, 1986; Kramsch's *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, 1993) that raises their consciousness in this regard; literature that not only informs them of the variables imposed by context on teaching practice and the importance and benefits of taking those variables into account, but also of the consequences of a failure to do so through the analysis of efforts such as the Bangalore Project and the ELEC. This literature survey could then be used to form the basis of a series of tasks requiring the application of the ST's critical skills. Such tasks might include the following:

- Reviewing an account of a well-known project and trying to identify its successes and failures in terms of the kinds of factors Henrichsen specifies.

- Having the STs select a teaching-learning context familiar to them, describe it in detail and then either (a) choose a current or bygone idea (an approach, method or technique) and suggest (i.e. anticipate), using some or all Henrichsen's factors, the kind of reception it might get, why, and ways of countering/negotiating any

predicted problems; or (b) describe their selected teaching-learning context in terms of as many of the factors featured in Henrichsen's taxonomy as possible. If not familiar with a particular context, they may either be provided with the details of one or asked to investigate one by drawing on the literature and the experience of colleagues.

- Having STs consider ways of gleaning contextual information relating to Henrichsen's elements so as to set parameters on a possible pedagogy for any particular set of learners. Ideas might include preparatory reading (books, journal and magazine articles etc.) on the relevant culture(s) and its educational institutions/hierarchy; consultation with colleagues experienced at working in the particular environment concerned; questionnaires for the language learners themselves, as well as the immediate and more distant (i.e. super-ordinate) educational bodies influencing teaching practice and student-teacher behaviour; and, most obviously, experience acquired gradually through direct contact (both inside and outside the classroom) with the learners themselves. STs could, in addition, be required to actually devise a questionnaire they think would be effective, providing justification for its format.

9.3.4 Syllabus Design/Implementation Strategies

The main advantage of involving STs in the process of designing a syllabus and considering the means of its implementation lies in creating via that process - and albeit artificially - an opportunity to build a programme of learning which requires the ST to practically realise those considerations given to context and the principles governing the diffusion of ideas, as well as to the ideas themselves that will, in some form or other, feature in the syllabus. In other words, it involves the application and integration of knowledge and insights derived from engaging in those activities described in sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.3. Additionally, it serves to help develop the ST's sense of initiative and self-confidence.

By designing a syllabus, therefore, the ST is meeting most, if not all, of the criteria (set out in 9.2) according to which the informed, autonomous teacher may be defined. The syllabus ought to exist as a

tangible interface between language teaching theory and practice, and for it to function effectively in that role requires the mediation of the teacher-designer as an autonomous agent able to appraise all aspects of the situation in which he is operating and to evaluate, select from and edit the ideas familiar to him during the process of its construction and recommended realisation.

The language teacher educator may, of course, need to encourage the application/integration of knowledge derived from other of the LTE activities described here, and the depth of analysis (of contextual conditions, for example) preceding the structuring and technical realisation of a syllabus can be varied according to time constraints, the STs' level of experience and general knowledge of the field etc. However the language teacher chooses to adjust the task in the light of such factors, its broad nature will remain fundamentally unchanged: Firstly, a particular set of learners and a teaching context would, again, need to be defined. This could either be done by the teacher and supplied to the STs, or alternatively it could be the product of the STs' own research, direct experience or, perhaps least desirably, his own imagination. Once the teaching-learning situation is established, the ST would then be required to design a programme of learning in response to that situation, along with projections as to how it might be effectively realised. Most importantly, given the broader, overall emphasis on reflection, he would be asked to provide detailed justification for any design/implementational decisions made, indicating how they have attempted to merge theoretico-analytic with contextual knowledge, and, in each case, to what specific end.

9.3.5 Self/Teacher Observation and Classroom Research

The kind of reflection I am suggesting which lies at the heart of autonomous teaching and ought, therefore, to feature centrally in LTE programmes, is very much akin to what Kemmis & McTaggart (1982) and Nunan (1990) refer to as *action research*; that is:

> ...trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning. The result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and the school, and better articulation and justification of the educational rationale of what goes on. Action research provides a way of working which links theory and practice into the one whole: ideas-in-action.
>
> (Kemmis and McTaggart 1982, p. 5)

Action research is, as Nunan is eager to point out, not merely "research grafted onto practice", but...

> ...represents a particular attitude on the part of the practitioner, an attitude in which the practitioner is engaged in critical reflection of ideas, the informed application and experimentation if ideas in practice, and the critical evaluation of the outcomes of such application.
>
> (Nunan 1990, p. 63)

As Nunan (ibid.) and Widdowson (1993, p. 266) observe, such attitudes and abilities have to be nurtured, or "induced"; and it is through the kind of self and teacher observation recommended above as a valuable facet of the teaching practicum exercise, as well as through classroom research analysis/techniques, that this induction can be achieved. There is no shortage of literature recommending how such LTE practices can be implemented, and I deal with the two types simultaneously here because they have a good deal in common, each involving as it does a consideration of/reflection on teacher and learner behaviour in the language classroom.

Self and teacher observation The value of these activities lies both in providing the learner with insights into his and others' teaching practices (good and bad, effective and ineffective) as well as developing in him the kind of analytical sense, or 'tools', via which he will become able to more confidently stand back and critically evaluate what he does. As we have seen, this aspect of LTE can form a part of the practicum, where the teacher plays an important role in guiding the development of these analytical skills. The ways in which self/teacher observation is realisable have been documented by various people (e.g. Bailey 1990, Day 1990, Porter et al 1990) and include the use of observation sheets, ST diaries and journals, written ethnography, and audio/video recordings. In focusing on student teacher observation in particular, Day suggests that a formal programme of observation can assist the student in:

1. developing a terminology for understanding and discussing the teaching process,
2. developing an awareness of the principles and decision-making that underlie effective teaching,
3. distinguishing between effective and ineffective classroom practices,
4. identifying techniques and practices student teachers can apply to their own teaching.

Advantages 3 and 4 are to some extent context-dependent in that teaching practices can vary in their efficacy according to teaching-learning situation. In this respect they could be said to be of limited value in an LTE programme which seeks to establish general principles that can then be applied appropriately to specific contexts. Advantages 1 and 2, on the other hand, are very relevant to the process of nurturing autonomous teachers who, above all else, need to reflect upon what it is they are doing and the decisions they are making. Classroom aspects which Day suggests might be the subject of observation include seating arrangements, teacher and student talk, at-task behaviour, movement patterns, teacher expectations, classroom management, and motivation.

Classroom Research Although undoubtedly sharing certain benefits with self/teacher observation activities, classroom research is distinguishable by its more formal approach to classroom analysis; an approach, as its title suggests, guided by recognised research procedures, and exemplified in Day's 1986 publication 'Talking to Learn'. While its results may serve to make similar statements to those of self/teacher observation activities, they are normally based on larger data sets and seek - validly or otherwise (see Widdowson 1993 for criticisms of classroom centred research (CCR)) - to offer more general pronouncements about classroom behaviour. Whether or not one questions such statements on the grounds that they assume a kind of generic classroom which ignores contextual variability, it is still worthwhile to look at three advantages of CCR proposed by Long in 1983.

The first advantage Long identifies he refers to as *the substantive contribution of CCR findings*. Specifically, he refers to the way in which CCR can help expose "the frequent failure of methodological prescriptions to translate into changes in classroom practice" (1983, p. 285). In other words, it can, like teaching practice (re. 9.3.2) help convey to the ST the problem of transferring theory into practice, and in doing so alert and inform him in

the fashion being suggested here. Long illustrates his point by referring to Long and Sato's 1983 study in which six teachers professing to believe in communicative language teaching and who had recently graduated from masters programmes in TESOL "with firmly 'communicative' orientations", nevertheless employed teaching practices in their classes that were distinctly non-communicative in terms of their language use, the only exception being the issuing of orders by the teacher.

The second advantage of CCR noted by Long is the development of "a range of analytic devices, principally ways of classifying teachers' and students' classroom verbal behaviour" (ibid. p. 288). As Long himself argues, these devices, a bi-product of CCR, provide teachers/teachers to be with the means for monitoring their own or colleagues' classrooms, something Day (above) claims of classroom observation. Long goes on to say that "Knowing something about the methodology of CCR ...is one means of providing for continued professional development". In other words it forms part of the apparatus which works to promote critical reflection in language teachers.

Finally, Long suggests that CCR can help combat the kinds of bandwagons (referred to in Chapter 1) which have arisen from the lure of too many "well-packaged but unsubstantiated prescriptions as to what and how to teach". Given the pertinence of his comments in this regard to the general spirit of the present study, they are worth quoting at some length. He states:

> One set of beliefs, assumptions, and assertions can unseat another very different set without any intervening advance in the state of knowledge about language learning in or out of classrooms. Quasi-religious conviction and persuasion replace theory and experiment; and a new bandwagon sweeps the field ...In the 1980s, the teacher in training is confronted by writers advocating several different approaches to syllabus design (structural, situational, topical, notional, functional, procedural, task, and combinations thereof), and as many different teaching methods as you can shake a stick at. Many writers and instructors 'solve' the problem by reviewing them all, and then suggesting that the trainee opt for eclecticism, thereby getting the best of each. It is never quite made clear how the teacher (or instructor) is to know which the best parts are.
>
> (Long 1983, p. 291)

Long suggests that teachers are better able to make more informed decisions with the help of CCR which can at least provide some indication of which competing methods, materials etc. make a difference in the

classroom. That is, "...*systematic* observation of classroom processes can show whether potential language learning opportunities are being effected" (ibid. p. 291, my emphasis).

A further benefit classroom research is able to offer language teacher preparation is that identified by Ellis who in his discussion of the value of SLA research states:

> ...SLAR can also contribute to the processes that lie at the centre of teacher development; the forming of an ideology about teaching and learning an L2, the acquisition of techniques and procedures for action, and the evaluation of these through reflection. Furthermore ...SLAR provides a resource ...for developing activities for awareness- raising in teacher development programmes.
>
> (Ellis 1994, p. 187)

Although discussing SLAR specifically, it is fair to assume that these advantages Ellis identifies apply equally to classroom research and, like all the activities and skills mentioned in this section, can help realise the notion referred to by Doyle (1990) as "the reflective professional"; someone able to view research and theory not as sources of "rules or prescriptions for classroom application but rather knowledge and methods of enquiry useful in deliberating about teaching problems and practices" (Kwo 1994, p. 113).

9.3.6 General Discussion and Debate

Discussion and debate is perhaps the most obvious form of reflection and it thus deserves to be treated not merely as a useful peripheral activity or bi-product of the kinds of activities outlined above, but as something of considerable value in itself and deserving of its own niche in LTE programmes. Not only do discussions and debates provide a forum for the evaluation of ideas of different kinds, but equally importantly they help, once again, to hone the participants' critical skills while also serving to disabuse them of any perception they might have that ideas and individuals' perceptions or interpretations of them are not prone to variability. In other words, the STs are exposed to what is in fact a state of fluidity, inexactness, or irresolution in the field which naturally provides latitude for teacher initiative in the creation of pedagogical solutions to particular teaching situations.

Discussions and debates can be structured in a myriad different ways including workshops, balloon debates on a particular issue or idea, group/individual analysis of an approach (for example) followed by a presentation of one's understanding and opinions of it.

9.3.7 Conference Attendance

Although clearly it would not be practical to include conference attendance as a component of LTE programmes, and whilst conferences can certainly act as breeding grounds for the kind of ill-informed parochialism the present study is intended to warn against, they can, however, equally provide an environment where ideas, fashionable or otherwise, are taken to task and rigorously examined. As such they have the potential to provide an experience which again reinforces the important nature or centrality of the enquiry process, and the possibility of calling into question virtually all ideas however widely they may be endorsed. On these grounds, the very least LTE programmes *can* do is encourage their students to attend such conferences whenever the opportunity presents itself, and spell out to them the benefits of doing so in terms of their developing a spirit of enquiry in keeping with the goal of autonomous and informed teacher practice.

9.4 A Final Note

Although the activities looked at here reflect a micro-perspective on teaching (associated with a training-view of teacher preparation) *as well as* a macro-perspective (associated with an education-view of teacher preparation), as Larsen-Freeman (1983) notes, both dimensions need to be addressed. Moreover, and crucially for present purposes, both dimensions and the activities they encompass have in common the fact that they can be seen to potentially promote in some way informed autonomy in teachers.

While this overview of possible LTE activities is by no means exhaustive, and the intention is certainly *not* to suggest that all the activities it includes can or ought to be used in LTE programmes, it should, nevertheless, serve to give at least a reasonable indication of how what may appear to be idealistic and lofty principles can be realised in LTE

programmes in the interest of producing teachers capable of independent thought and appropriate and effective pedagogical decisions based on a reflective mental set geared to producing theoretical integrity and situational insight.

It is gratifying to note that the production of these kinds of teacher qualities appears to be the motivation for a number of recently-published language teacher education textbooks. I refer in particular to the Oxford scheme, *Language Teaching*, whose editors state its purpose as "...to guide teachers towards the critical appraisal of ideas and the informed application of these ideas to their own classrooms", as well as to provide "...the means for teachers to take the initiative themselves in pedagogic planning" (Candlin and Widdowson 1990, p. ix). The emphasis, they say, is on "critical enquiry as a basis for effective action" and continue:

> ...advances in language teaching stem from the independent efforts of teachers in their own classrooms. This independence is not brought about by imposing fixed ideas and imposing fashionable formulas. It can only occur where teachers, individually or collectively, explore principles and experiment with techniques.
>
> (Candlin and Widdowson 1990, p. ix)

By involving student teachers in this (cross-referential) exploration of the principles and techniques underlying areas such as grammar and vocabulary teaching and syllabus design, as well as a consideration of their classroom application, this series exemplifies nicely the way in which teacher education programmes can promote the sort of informed synthesis of theory and practice recommended above. What bears re-emphasising, however, is that this kind of educational tool is of greatest benefit to those individuals able to relate it to their own teaching experience. Indeed there is a strong argument for making it a universal requirement that candidates applying to enter LTE programmes have already acquired a certain level of teaching experience. While, as we have seen, the practicum can provide some limited experience to those lacking it, arguably its greatest value lies in giving those with experience the opportunity to reflect on and directly apply ideas generated from this type of text in a way they may never have done before, and thus seeing hands-on how they work out - or might not work out - in practice.

The question now arises as to what extent the scheme for language teacher preparation programmes proposed in the foregoing pages, while perhaps sound in principle, will be subject to transformation and modification

according to its intended context of operation. That is, just as the reformulation of CLT described in Chapter 6 was assessed in terms of its practical implications, and in particular its fit with the Japanese language teaching environment, so these suggestions for language teacher education need to be considered in terms of their feasibility given the nature of the Japanese character and educational institutions.

Chapter 10

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION: RELATING THEORY TO PRACTICE

10.1 Introduction

It would not be realistic to suppose that one can simply take proposals of whatever kind, however theoretically valid they may seem, and apply them across the board regardless of local conditions. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental premises of the present study. Inevitably, certain ideas will take better than others according to how well they sit with established customs and, in our case, the machinery of education and the Japanese language teaching enterprise in particular. It is important to realise, therefore, that any conviction held in those proposals for language teacher education programmes outlined in Chapter 9, needs to be moderated by a consideration of such customs. Individuals or institutions proposing to implement them would do well to analyse not only which ideas are/are not likely to succeed, but also the likelihood of them undergoing (not necessarily by design) a distortion or modification in application that leaves them more in tune with local conditions. There is, I shall argue in Chapter 11, a certain inevitability about this kind of distortion/ modification.

With this in mind, let us then look now at how each of the seven activity types recommended as promoters of the various skills and knowledge types underlying reflective autonomy might fare in relation to the Japanese context.

10.2 The Analysis of Language Teacher Texts

10.2.1 Performing Critical Discourse Analyses on Selected Texts

It will be recalled that this activity refers to the deconstruction of different types of professional language teaching and language teacher education

texts, with an eye to identifying theoretical agendas, the faithful or otherwise representation in language textbooks of principles of approach said to inform them, and the internal consistency of language textbook methodology.

The fundamental nature of this activity is one of identification and the perception of logical relationships, and as such it might be expected to impose minimally, if at all, upon cultural dispositions. Nevertheless, the question is raised as to what extent - if at all - logic is itself a cultural artefact, and thus whether the value of this activity might be lost in a culture where traditions of logic are possibly not in line with those of the Western philosophical tradition. In response it is almost certainly true to say that the spread of academic disciplines, science, technology etc. over recent decades has brought with it a general shift away from provincial to more universal ways of thinking and behaving. This is specifically true of the Western philosophical tradition the mode of reasoning of which it seems is now widely assumed to be valid. On this basis, and given Japan's status as a modern industrialised nation closely linked to the West and thus necessarily operating within this tradition, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the kind of critical analysis of texts suggested here would present little problem for the Japanese whose notions of logic personal experience also suggests are comparable to those of the West.

10.2.2 Analysing Schemes of Thought Featured in the Literature

The potential here for a mismatch is greater mainly because it calls for certain attitudinal traits which are not prized or encouraged in the educational field - or indeed in society at large - in Japan. The kind of critical attitude to ideas this type of analysis involves and promotes is very much at odds with the Confucianist disposition toward humility so highly valued among Japanese, as well as the reluctance to stand out and presume a position of authority by evaluating the work of others. This tendency to self-deprecation both motivates and is in part motivated by the considerable status afforded to authorship and the authority ideas assume merely by virtue of the fact that they are in print. That authority effectively stifles any inclination that may exist to pass judgement, for it threatens to elevate the critic to a position that would be improper according to near-universally accepted principles of behaviour. These effects would be especially telling on student teachers who already

consider themselves to be in a position of subordination, and for whom notions of hierarchy are so much ingrained.

Furthermore, in the case of English language textbooks, there could exist among Japanese a feeling that to engage in criticism of texts is a rather fruitless activity given the fact that in the majority of secondary schools, and to a lesser extent colleges and universities, language teachers are obliged to use textbooks prescribed by the Mombusho - although it must be said there is increased room nowadays for supplementary materials that allow for greater teacher initiative and creativity. Account also needs to be taken of the fact that at a very pragmatic level, the government-prescribed textbooks are a quite effective means of providing learners with the kind of English language ability they need in order to pass the very traditional university entrance and graduation examinations.

10.2.3 Performing Contrastive Analyses on Different Texts

As with 10.2.1, this is for the most part an identification exercise, involving in this instance a comparative look at the way in which different accounts treat similar phenomena, and establishing if, how and where any divergence between them occurs. As such it is unlikely that the student teacher will experience any conflict of interest, although in the case of identifying variability in the use and interpretation of terminology in particular, there may in extreme cases be certain reservations. If, for example, a writer has deliberately skewed a term or idea in order to make it consistent with his own theoretical viewpoint, arguably the perception of such behaviour presupposes an appreciation of the motivation for it, which in turn might on occasions be said to require a certain cynicism on the part of the reader - in this case the student teacher. If this is so, it is questionable whether a Japanese would easily be able to adopt such an attitude; or if he could, whether he would choose to make his opinions known. Factors such as writer authority, mentioned above, suggest that he might not.

10.3 The Teaching Practicum

This element of the teacher preparation scheme proposed in Chapter 9 could be expected to produce mixed results in the Japanese context,

although on balance it would appear to be quite viable, not least because of the great abundance and sophistication of audio-visual technology available in Japan; a boon of the Japanese educational enterprise in general and one which can help make the teaching practicum a richer, more productive experience.

On a rather more profound note, Japanese teachers, like any other, would gain the benefit of insights derived from direct teaching experience. In attempting specifically to apply communicative principles in Japanese classrooms, they would be eminently well-positioned to appreciate 'hands on' the gulf between ideas in theory and as realised in textbooks, and their application in practice. Moreover, under competent supervision, they could be made aware of the possibility and trained in the art of circumventing what to them might seem insurmountable cultural obstacles governing classroom attitudes and behaviour. What would need to be recognised here is that there would in many cases be an initial reluctance on the part of the educational institutions, and to some extent the teachers themselves, to apply such 'radical' ideas. Fears in this regard could be allayed by illustrating through the practicum the way in which compromise between theory and practice can be fashioned, thereby simultaneously reinforcing the importance of analytical teachers, and thus also the significance of those other proposed elements of the LTE programme designed to nurture such teachers. Equally, the practicum can serve to highlight the need (referred to in 8.3.3) for 'the establishment' to open up to developments in the profession, and encourage it to accept that there may be value in accommodating new ideas that run counter to traditional practices.

Where one might anticipate problems with the practicum is in the nature of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. The role of the supervisor is such that it raises the possibility of tension with hierarchical influences on behaviour, and while he in his capacity as 'supervisor' will probably feel quite at ease with being critical during his discussions with student teachers, the same cannot be said of the student teachers themselves. Their subordinate status will discourage dissension and encourage deference. This situation could hamper the development of those critical skills this study so encourages and which are very much the product of debate, discussion and an inquisitorial and sceptical attitude. Moreover, the relative status of supervisor and supervisee could lead to a situation where, during his classroom teaching, the student teacher feels

obliged to conform closely to what he perceives his mentor's expectations to be, regardless of however much the supervisor might try to put his mind at ease in this respect.

It needs to be emphasised, however, that although the Japanese student teacher may be especially susceptible to this kind of a response to the practicum situation, student teachers of any nationality can feel and behave similarly depending on their own cultural influences, individual upbringing and personality, as well as on the personality of their supervisor.

10.4 Familiarisation with Principles Governing the Diffusion of Innovations in Language Teaching

This is primarily an awareness-raising exercise and as such might reasonably be expected to pose little difficulty for the Japanese. Indeed, a greater understanding of those forces which come into play in determining whether or not an idea in language teaching is adopted by a community could be seen not merely as a means through which to better prepare the few individuals intending to teach or manage language programmes outside of Japan, but also as a way of providing the Japanese language teaching profession at large with a framework within which to plan for internal change in accordance with the ideas set out in this study, should they wish to take up the challenge.

Instilling in Japanese student teachers an appreciation of those principles governing the diffusion of ideas (re. Ellington, 9.3.3) one would expect to be a relatively easy task. As we have seen, the Japanese belong (and are highly conscious of the fact that they belong) to a society often rigidly bound by institutional structures and behavioural traditions; as such, the significance to the fate of innovations of factors such as "originality, status, openness, harmony, group orientation, tolerance of deviancy, teacher/learner factors, educational philosophy, examinations, compatibility, reward" etc., is likely to be especially cogent for this group of individuals. Added to this is that fact that, either as English teachers or as English language students, many student teachers will have experienced first hand the kind of tensions (described in Chapters 1 and 8) those institutional structures and behavioural traditions create when juxtaposed with communicative language teaching methodology.

Where difficulties might arise, however, is not so much in recognising and appreciating the principles governing the diffusion of innovations, but in acknowledging, in the interests of professional advancement and good pedagogy, the possible need to compromise the way in which those principles are realised in Japan. Once again, for a nation so ethnocentric and regardful of deeply-rooted behavioural traditions seen as fundamental to its very identity, it is difficult to *relate* to, let alone sympathise with, a view of education which requires that such principles undergo any kind of serious scrutiny in the interests of accepting and diffusing alien ideas.

The fact that such an apparently intolerant attitude could exist in Japan is somewhat surprising to the outsider who quite correctly tends to regard the Japanese as particularly familiar not only with the phenomenon of adapting to imported ideas, but of developing them and turning them to greatest advantage. Indeed many view this - often in rather critical terms - as a hallmark of Japanese industry, claiming rather unfairly that it shows a lack of creativity or originality. Either way, the Japanese would seem to be highly adept at knowing how to diffuse change without actually allowing it to impinge significantly upon their own cultural values; that is, they regulate and/or accommodate to the diffusion of change in such a way that they get the best of both worlds. It is this fusion that proves so illusive for many Westerners who frequently and unexpectedly find themselves feeling alienated by a culture which superficially has all the trappings to which they themselves are accustomed.

Given then that in general terms the diffusion of innovations is not a problem for the Japanese, the question arises as to why the diffusion of approaches to the teaching of language or language teacher education should face such an uphill struggle. The answer may have something to do with the fact that language is so bound up with identity, and, as mentioned earlier, the Japanese sense of self-identity is one that is held very dear indeed and discourages any over-zealous, overt display of native-like proficiency in foreign languages. Furthermore, any change in language teaching/language teacher education will tend to strike at the very heart of the prevailing educational philosophy. As we have seen, that philosophy is far from superficial in Japan, intricately bound up as it is with ingrained behavioural precepts; with social and political life. In this respect it is also of note that while commercial *products* (cars, computers,

clothes etc.) may be very much in line with those of the West, the *human systems and processes* responsible for their development and production nevertheless remain highly in tune with the Confucian ideals of hierarchy, loyalty, harmony, groupism and co-operation spoken of earlier.

10.5 Syllabus Design/Implementation Strategies

The design of a syllabus, foreign language or otherwise, ought to proceed according to two main criteria. The first is whether it is appropriate given the learners' goals (their purpose for studying the language, the nature of the exams they wish to pass, etc.); the second, whether it takes into account what is known about the process of language learning. Given that the syllabus need not determine methodology (re. 5.3.1), its suitability vis à vis the *socio-cultural* context in which it is to be operative would appear not to be a criterion for syllabus design, but for its methodological realisation (or implementation) which could be tailored to fit such local conditions.

The activity of *designing* a syllabus is therefore one of establishing a logical, causal relationship between learner goals and learning processes on the one hand, and the pedagogical framework that allows the teacher to respond to these most efficiently and effectively on the other. As such it entails the application of identification and logical skills which, it was maintained above, ought to present the Japanese with no problem.

The process of *implementing* the syllabus is equally one of identification (in this case of contextual idiosyncrasies that govern implementation) and the provision of a rationale for the methodology recommended for addressing those idiosyncrasies.

Where the process of syllabus design is most appropriate and of potentially greatest advantage for Japanese student teachers in particular, is in the possibility of helping provoke reflection on that parochialism which so stifles open-mindedness and development in English language teaching in Japan. Assuming such reflection can be induced, it may in turn help generate momentum toward a change of attitude which boasts a more tolerant, liberal outlook. As members of a language teaching/learning community which is heavily biased towards grammar-translation, and often unappreciative of the efforts and benefits of those espousing and attempting to introduce a more communicative approach, Japanese student teachers might find it a revealing experience to attempt

to design a syllabus which seeks to develop structural knowledge of English in an environment (most probably as ESL environment) where learners are predominantly concerned with functioning 'in the community', and tend to be dismissive of formal accuracy. Such learners, it was argued in Chapter 3, tend to suffer a deficit in structural correctness as a result of short cut strategies that 'get the job done'. They frequently appear to wave off any focus on form, seeing it as irrelevant to their needs, and despite the likelihood of flouting codes of appropriacy as a result. Their very pragmatic outlook means that their language fossilises short of what is desirable in terms of all four of Hymes's parameters of communicative competence. The requirement of having to construct a syllabus designed to promote the kind of structural knowledge of English the Japanese are so heavily inclined towards, in an environment which is broadly unsympathetic to anything that does not appear to have any immediate pragmatic value, is not only a useful exercise in thought and pedagogical ingenuity, but also one which might stimulate the kind of fruitful self-reflection referred to, as well as some consideration of the frustrations faced by pioneers of innovation in Japan and the possible legitimacy of their causes, however contrary they may be to established practices.

10.6 Self/Teacher Observation and Classroom Research

The productivity of self and teacher observation exercises could, potentially, be compromised by two Japanese character traits. Much like those reflective aspects of the teaching practicum, the benefits of insights derived from watching and analysing taught classes risk being partially offset by the coming into play of deeply embedded notions of hierarchy on the one hand, and the perception of self-diminishment as highly virtuous on the other. These two traits will tend to reinforce each other.

The student teacher will likely feel very ill at ease with the prospect of voicing any criticism of classroom performances he observes. In the case of commenting on peer performances, and despite an understanding of his predicament by all parties concerned (i.e. himself, his supervisor, and the teacher(s) under observation), he would nevertheless be inclined to consider himself to be assuming a position of authority not in keeping with the principle of humility, so tenaciously honoured. Moreover he

would see his actions as potentially causing a loss of face for the teachers concerned. In the case of criticising a more qualified/experienced individual, he would feel bound to observe the Japanese code of hierarchy which prohibits anything other than an attitude of deference on his part. He is after all 'the apprentice'.

Unfortunately, with this activity comes a dilemma for the Japanese student teacher; a 'catch 22' situation. While he is indisposed to voicing criticism because to his mind it elevates himself and has the potential to embarrass those whose actions are the subject of his criticism, he is conscious of the fact that by the same token bestowing praise risks conveying an impression of superiority and patronisation. The only alternative course of action open to him is to attempt to maintain a neutral, less judgmental stance, if indeed this is possible. Yet by taking even this option he faces the problem that being non-committal, evasive or silent is, in Japanese culture, frequently interpreted as a sign of disapproval.

As for the Japanese student teacher's observations of his own teaching efforts, he would generally feel bound to be critical in the extreme. This kind of behaviour is often seen as unreasonable, even comical to foreign eyes, but again, for the Japanese, to do otherwise would be to flout the all-important precept of humility.

These constraints on behaviour are not particularly conducive to an atmosphere of frank opinion and discussion; and although the Japanese undoubtedly do have their own way of conveying praise and criticism, approval and disapproval, it is packaged in such indirect and vague behaviour, that it cannot serve very adequately in classroom observation exercises where the object is to be direct, specific and incisive in criticism (both positive and negative), and where productivity is so dependent upon open debate and the honest exchange of ideas.

There is little reason to believe that a focus on classroom research - whether involving the planning and carrying out of research or simply a knowledge of the relevant body of literature - would be anything but beneficial to Japanese student teachers. What is entailed in both cases is a largely objective process of observation and analysis which can ultimately serve to guide or inform the student teacher's own classroom practices, and which encroaches little on socio-cultural territory.

In the case of research design, methodological skills would be involved that call on science and logic, neither of which are particularly

subject to the influence of character traits. The willingness of Japanese to engage in carrying out this kind of research is evident from the not insubstantial contribution they have made to the literature in this area, much of which focuses on *Japanese* English language classrooms. With the support not only of international professional organisations/ publications, but also local ones such as JACET and JALT, these efforts have, it was noted in Chapter 1, helped considerably to increase the applied linguistics research profile of Japan. This is perhaps cause for optimism in that its ability to command international recognition and respect might endow the insights and proposals generated from such research with more credibility in the eyes of the local educational institutions. This is crucial if language teaching and teacher education in Japan are to open up to the idea of change.

10.7 General Discussion and Debate

The Japanese have a proclivity for consultation for which they are renowned and which perhaps stems in part from the desire to deflect attention from the self and suppress individualism. The commercial success of the nation as a whole is often put down to unity in the workplace and singularity of purpose, two features which in turn are widely attributed to this emphasis on consultation, group discussion and decision-making.

One would expect this predisposition to bode well for discussion and debate in the language teacher education process so long as such discussion/debate is seen as an opportunity for awareness raising and reconciliation rather than confrontation and the imposition of views. As with teacher observation, the benefits of discussion and debate are compromised by the potential risk of causing loss of face and projecting oneself excessively. However, they are certainly not lost altogether, and within the less personal environment of a debating forum which exists precisely to provoke discussion and enlighten its participants, such risks are conceivably reduced.

Furthermore, there exists the possibility of altering the format of 'the debate' so as to make it more conducive to the Japanese situation. Thus for example the kind of less obviously confrontational interpretations suggested in 9.3.6 might be stressed, such as workshops and

group analyses of approaches or ideas which can then be presented *as* group observations and opinions, thereby diverting the focus away from any particular individual. Any differences in these observations and opinions could then be used to form the basis of a comparative-contrastive analysis rather than as the catalyst for a more openly argumentative form of discussion and debate.

Another option might be to ask individuals to "put themselves in the shoes of" somebody wishing to espouse and doggedly defend a particular idea in language teaching. While on the one hand helping ensure that the benefits are reaped of a more vigorous mode of debate, this arrangement would, again, also serve to depersonalize that debate by allowing the participants to assume a kind of alter ego and thus distance themselves from the ideas and opinions they may wish put forward.

Finally the format of debate could be made such that all arguments are channelled through representatives or a chairman, rather than addressed directly from one individual to another. Such conventions would help diminish animosity and feelings of discomfort by effectively ritualising procedures. Indeed it is often said that this kind of ritualisation is a fundamental part of Japanese society where crowded living circumstances and a lack of personal space (see 7.2.1) has meant that rituals have developed over time as a means of coping with the tensions, aggression and confrontation that result from this situation.

10.8 Conference Attendance

It has been firmly established, that despite currently undergoing a very gradual process of transformation, language teaching in Japan remains highly parochial. It can be especially valuable, therefore, for Japanese teachers/teachers-to-be to attend conferences as a means of confronting alternative views and the realisation that there do exist other, often well-founded ways of approaching language teaching. This is particularly true of international conferences (such as the annual JALT conference held in Japan, and TESOL in the U.S.) which boast a high degree of professionalism and where a large cross section of the language teaching community is represented. Not only can such conferences open up the mind and present opportunities for stimulating discussion and reflection, but through providing the field with credibility and a degree of integrity

they can also help reconcile not just Japanese teachers themselves, but the higher echelons of the Japanese educational establishment to the feasibility and possible desirability of change. The various language teaching institutions in Japan tend to encourage conference participation in the same way that they encourage professional publications, and for similar reasons: They reflect favourably on the institutions themselves, enhancing their all-important reputations as active and committed centres of learning (re. Chapter 7).

One point of some relevance here concerns differing perceptions and thus expectations of conferences. Participants, depending on their cultural and particularly their educational background, come to conferences with certain quite specific ideas about what they will find there, the kinds of activities they will engage in, and how they will profit by attending. Thus, some see these events for example as largely social occasions which provide an opportunity to catch up with colleagues. Others see them more as venues for an exchange of ideas and intellectualising. They can be viewed as places to learn, or as ideal occasions to 'show off' ones learning. For some, they are seen merely as places to be seen in and as opportunities to represent one's own educational institution. There are no doubt even those drawn merely by the spectacle of the event, or because conferences provide an ideal chance to familiarise themselves with the latest language teaching materials. At a micro-level also, preconceptions exist with regard to such things as note-taking, when to applaud, and whether or not to ask questions and interrupt.

Having established that conference attendance is potentially of benefit to Japanese student teachers (both pre- and in-service) by promoting awareness and open-mindedness, the question arises as to whether these goals match Japanese preconceptions of what conference participation involves. Provided that learning is interpreted simply as passively observing and learning 'what is out there', then a match seems perfectly feasible. In terms of the overt criticism, analysis and cross-examination of ideas encountered during presentations (and the consequent development of critical skills and a solidly founded confidence in new ideas) this is hardly consistent with Japanese expectations for reasons specified earlier relating to characteristic perceptions and behavioural traits - lack of self-esteem, unwillingness to project oneself, respect for those of higher standing, the threat of loss of face etc. Where

one might reasonably most expect to find and encourage a more openly enquiring attitude is at local conferences such as JALT and JACET where confidence would presumably be higher. Unfortunately, however, although nominally the Japanese language teaching community hosts these events, in reality they are very much the product of American administration, a point which further illustrates the lack of self-regard (discussed in 10.9) felt by the great majority of Japanese involved in the field.

10.9 Other Issues

A number of points emerge from the above analysis, each of which deserves some comment.

To begin with, the occasions where there is most likely to be a clash of interest between (a) those recommendations made in Chapter 9 for promoting the development of reflective autonomy in language teacher education programmes, and (b) Japanese cultural dispositions, are those which call for an expression of opinion, particularly criticism. Where simple observation, the application of logic and objective, non-judgmental analysis are required, things can be expected to proceed fairly smoothly.

A second point concerns the caution with which one needs to treat cultural generalisations. While certain character traits or behavioural dispositions are clearly manifested to a greater extent in some cultures than others, and may be exhibited by the great majority of individuals within that culture, this is not to say there is no deviation from this pattern. Thus, although there exists among Japanese a strong and well documented tendency toward conformity, for example, there are nevertheless individuals who *are* outspoken, prepared to be critical of the status quo and willing to try and instigate change. The problem is that they are more often than not seen as misfits and generally regarded with scorn or contempt, or as figures of fun who are not to be taken seriously. Often they are people who have spent time overseas and had their outlook broadened as a result. They are therefore seen as not truly Japanese but as unwelcome hybrids trying, naively, to introduce alien and unwanted ideas. By seeing them as such, the establishment protects itself by creating the impression that any threat to the system is the result of forces from without, not from within.

It is this rather inward-looking, protectionist attitude that goes some way to explaining another apparent conflict which arises from comments made earlier regarding the authority of the printed word. Given that there is a certain deference shown toward ideas 'in print', one is led to wonder how those ideas are received if they promote methods of language teaching/teacher preparation that do not sit well with local cultural dispositions. The answer might lie in the fact that non-conformist ideas of this kind are generally associated with Western thought and seen as espousing Western values. Indeed it is telling that such ideas, even if penned by a Japanese hand, appear more often than not in English rather than in Japanese. The main local language teaching journal (JALT) bears witness to this tendency. By maintaining this distance, the possibility of conflict between local traditions and new ideas inspired from the West is reduced; contradictions are in a sense camouflaged.

I would suggest there is a further reason why the Japanese language teaching establishment maintains this distance. It has to do with what appears to be a lack of self-belief. When it comes to language teaching/learning, the Japanese consider themselves inferior. Such feelings are frequently and openly expressed and may be rooted in Japan's recent history. Following the second world war, English was reintroduced into Japanese schools after having been banned. It was pushed hard during the American occupation when the country's defeat was still very much at the forefront of people's minds and things Western - and American in particular - were regarded with a certain reverence. This climate affected the perceptions of language teaching where the Americans were again viewed as *the* wisdom behind the art of language teaching. Yet traditional teaching practices continued to dominate in Japan and their shortcomings in terms of producing communicatively proficient learners were now highlighted as the relevance of communicative ability became more poignant and Japan opened up not only to America, but to the world at large. It seems likely that this sudden realisation that (i) English had a significance beyond the passing of examinations, and (ii) students were not adequately equipped to communicate, instilled in the Japanese a sense of inferiority or ineptness in their teaching and learning of languages. One important manifestation of this has been a reluctance to pontificate on or simply voice opinions on the teaching of English, or languages in general.

Given self-belief, the Japanese are, it would seem, as capable of adopting a critical attitude in language teaching as any other people,

although the manner of its expression may be idiosyncratic and more rigidly governed. Thus, for example, one can point to the great success story of the Japanese electronics, car and fashion industries over the last 40 years. The developmental leaps these industries have made could only have taken place as a result of the constant reappraisal of current fashions, designs and techniques. Such reappraisal presupposes not only a critical eye which is able to identify shortcomings, but also a capacity and willingness to address and improve upon them. Because of their status as international leaders in these industries, one senses in the Japanese a greater confidence, pride and readiness to share ideas and opinions that may be counter to what is prevalent. In other words, there appears to be a self-perpetuating cycle at work; knowledge leads to a willingness to venture opinions and criticise, with the result that progress ensues. That progress leads to increased knowledge and self-confidence which generates further criticism, and so on.

There is, however, a need for caution here: while it is in the very nature of industry to be constantly developing and therefore competitive, this is not as obviously so in the world of education where progress or development ought not to be based upon cut-throat competition and the need to answer to the whims and fancies of consumers, but upon the desire to find that philosophy or model which produces the greatest and most efficient learning.

Nevertheless, the fact that in certain areas of endeavour there exists a greater willingness among Japanese to adopt a more critical perspective, not only suggests a need for discretion and qualification in making cultural generalisations, but also begs the question of whether it is possible to alter the Japanese perception of themselves as language teachers/learners; for it seems likely that were a shift toward greater self-confidence or self-esteem to occur, it would help trigger the kind of critical analysis and open debate necessary for a more liberal, objective and open-minded view of local language teaching practices, as well as alternative ideas infiltrating from 'outside'. Moreover, it would go a long way to ensuring the successful functioning of those language teacher education activities recommended above which call for a more contentious attitude on the part of student teachers.

A further point that deserves mention concerns the possibility of a rift between the increasingly well-informed community of Japanese foreign language teachers and LTE organisations who despite maintaining

a certain distance are increasingly more inclined toward a sympathetic view of change and the adoption of new ideas, and those larger, often very conservative educational institutions who see their credibility as inextricably linked to public and governmental expectations and perceptions. Because of the complex system of hierarchy and conformity into which education is intricately woven, these expectations and perceptions are very solidly founded with the result that any attempt to change them is a difficult and risky venture on which many institutions are unwilling to stake their reputations. Language teacher educators are therefore in a highly tenuous position, for they have to temper any desire they may have for change in their programmes and in attitudes at large to language teaching, with a sensitivity to the very real constraints imposed by political and educational bodies concerned with maintaining an ethos that meets the expectations of 'the establishment'. These constraints can doubtless be gradually dissipated, but it is a slow process, a point re-emphasised in Chapter 11. While increasing Japan's international language teaching profile in the fashion described above can go some way to harnessing support for change among the educational community, that community then needs to redirect the expectations of the Japanese public at large if new ideas and perspectives are to gain real legitimacy and the institutions backing them maintain their reputations while also promoting reform.

In conclusion it must be said that despite the very considerable influence wielded by tradition in Japan, it is neither a wholly unwelcome force in language teacher education, nor one which is entirely impervious to the effects of a field which was described in the abstract as dynamic, vibrant and enterprising, and which is experiencing such rapid growth. There undoubtedly has been and continues to be a shift in language teaching in Japan toward greater moderation, open-mindedness and willingness to explore alternatives, and whilst this is not justification for complacency, nevertheless perhaps we should be more cognizant of the fact that such changes are taking place, and feel a greater sense of satisfaction with the current situation than experience suggests is customary.

Chapter 11

CONCLUSIONS

11.1 A Review of the Fundamental Issues

This study has sought to achieve two main and closely related aims. These may be summed up as follows:

Firstly, it has attempted to provide some indication of and justification for why the field of language teaching has, particularly over recent years, acquired an undesirable reputation for fickleness, resulting in a common perception of it as immature and a lightweight player in academia. In addressing this issue, communicative language teaching - currently the most prevalent approach to foreign/second language teaching - has been analysed in terms of (i) its conceptual/theoretical soundness, and (ii) the way in which it is taken up, interpreted and realised - in particular within the Japanese educational context.

The general message here is that there exists a tendency among the language teaching community at large to interpret ideas at a rather superficial level; to 'read' them in a way which ensures they receive the broad gist of what the originators of those ideas intended, yet while failing to show sufficient motivation to delve further into their underlying integrity, and to adequately assess if and how they may be suited to particular teaching-learning situations. I have argued that these two aspects are fundamentally related, and if their relationship is not sufficiently understood the chances are that the ideas concerned will not deliver the goods they promise, and there will result a mismatch between the pedagogical application of those ideas and the context in which it takes place. This in turn will lead to ineffectual teaching practices and thus impaired learning. If the artisan is not master of his tools, he is unable to take full advantage of them - the teacher needs to be well-versed in the approaches, methods and techniques he employs, for only then is he able to know what can and cannot be manipulated in a way that allows him to respond judiciously and harmoniously, yet effectively, to the realities of the context in which he is operating.

The second aim of the study has been to identify *where* any modification of attitudes to new ideas needs to occur if the field is to acquire a more flattering, less disjointed image; and to proffer a series of suggestions as to how it might proceed so as to produce more reflective and discerning teachers able to show the kind of judgement, initiative and skill in applying ideas necessary to producing such harmonious and effective pedagogical solutions to specific teaching-learning situations.

Conclusions drawn here bear centrally upon what I shall generically term the *language teacher preparation process*, for it is during such preparation - so the argument goes - that long-term change needs to be initiated. And it is in establishing more precisely where in that process change needs to occur, as well as describing the nature of the change itself, that the invocation of a distinction (deemed by some to be unnecessary) between teacher training and teacher education would seem to be warranted. That is to say, there has been a tendency for language teacher preparation programmes to serve more as teacher training programmes and (often) minimally as teacher education programmes designed not simply to furnish the teacher-to-be with a bag of pedagogic tricks, but also and more importantly, the mental approach or 'philosophy' needed to assess and utilise them appropriately and effectively. Where teacher preparation programmes *have* concerned themselves with issues relating to language teacher education, the focus - reflected heavily in LTE texts - has tended to be more on the student-teacher's reflections on/awareness of his teaching practices as manifested in practicum courses and the kinds of behavioural issues associated with classroom research, rather than on the importance of developing informed autonomy and a more broadly considerate approach in teacher behaviour generally.

Attempts to shake off its reputation for fickleness and provide language teaching with greater credibility and respect as a discipline have tended to reflect the view that what has been most crucially and obviously lacking over the years is a substantial and significant body of SLA and classroom based research (CBR). Commentators such as Michael Long are of the opinion that while there exists a proliferation of new ideas about language teaching designed to make it more effective and efficient, these are rarely accompanied by a comparable body of research data lending credence to them as pedagogic options. Instead, they are frequently and eagerly adopted on the basis of their intuitive appeal and the fact that they offer a new alternative to a community already floundering to find its feet.

Most importantly, they are able to acquire this foothold as a result of the kind of antipathy or apathy toward critical analysis that has constituted a major focus of this study.

Unfortunately, the approach taken by Long et al, while implicitly recognising this need for a change of attitude in language teaching, has nevertheless tended to marginalise such higher order concerns, with efforts being directed more at providing justification for the technical aspects of the profession. There are certain limitations with this, some of which have been highlighted in Chapter 5. To these may be added the following:

Firstly, research is inevitably context specific; that is, it is conducted in a particular environment where physical, social and psychological variables manifest themselves in a certain, distinctive fashion, and where conditions are often carefully controlled. This raises the question of how generalizable any findings are to alternative contexts in which teachers might find themselves operating.

Secondly, and still relating to the issue of context, two or three different ideas might be shown by studies to produce like results in a particular aspect of language learning. For example, they may each serve to increase reading speed to a similar degree in those studies carried out. However, this is not to say that each idea will work equally well with different sets of learners in different teaching-learning environments. There may prove to be a discrepancy between the way the same idea works in different environments as well as between the relative degrees of efficacy of the three different ideas when compared in alternative environments.

Finally, one might argue, with some justification, that while the longer-term effects of these research efforts on the proficiency of teachers and the reputation of the field may prove to be positive, the more immediate effect might be to add further to the sense of chaos such studies, ironically, seek to combat. That is, the very fact that they are so numerous and increasingly diverse in focus can compound the problem by reinforcing the perception of a discipline lacking in coherence, unity of purpose and direction, and struggling to justify any claims to serious academic status. From this perspective, the policy of increasing the volume of SLA and CB research is a risky one which, if it is to pay off, demands that useful - and where possible replicated - results be forthcoming.

The motivation for expanding SLA and CB research is undeniably praiseworthy and very much in keeping with the general tone of this study. Yet even where such research succeeds in rising above the kinds of challenges alluded to, the resultant body of findings that promise to shed light on aspects of language acquisition and which techniques produce what results in the classroom is, by itself, not enough to improve the situation in language teaching, for at the end of the day, teachers still need to have the attitude and abilities to be able themselves to make appropriate decisions according to context, and to be intellectually equipped to assess the validity and immediate utility of ideas. When teachers lack this 'vantage point' their teaching cannot be maximally effective, with the result that the discipline is - rightly or wrongly - undermined, and its theoretical basis called into question. What is highly problematical here is the fact that teaching, by its very nature and by virtue of the fact that it is by definition concerned with personalities and customs, is a somewhat inexact science. It needs to be inexact because these variables necessarily govern learner and therefore teacher behaviour. If the teacher does not respond to the variables the teaching-learning context throws up, he is not exercising his autonomy, and his pedagogy cannot be appropriate and therefore effective. In this respect, the validity and utility of all ideas in teaching are relative to the context in which they are to be applied. However, the very fact that there is call for autonomy and flexibility in language teaching - facets which imply variation or non-uniformity - again leaves the discipline prey to the criticism that it is disorientated, theoretically fragmented, and adrift. While, as I have sought to demonstrate in foregoing chapters, there is justification for the use of such adjectives, they have a tendency, perhaps, to stick for the wrong reasons.

So there appears to be something of a paradox here. On the one hand, teachers who fail to exhibit autonomy and respond flexibly to features of context cannot be expected to produce very significant results in terms of their students' learning, with the consequence that the field is likely to be criticised as inept, theoretically unsound and fragmented. On the other hand, if teachers *do* exercise the autonomy and flexibility necessary to ensuring that learning takes place more effectively and efficiently, the field is likewise criticised for a lack of unity and common direction suggesting the kind of paucity of research individuals such as Long have attempted to redress. The discipline of language teaching lies, it

seems, between a rock and a hard place, and it does so because the importance of teacher autonomy is not adequately recognised either within or outside of that discipline.

11.2 The Proposals for Change in Language Teacher Education: Some Considerations

11.2.1 Establishing a Realistic Time Frame

The changes suggested for LTE programmes and detailed in Chapter 8 are aimed at promoting an awareness amongst practitioners of the importance of autonomy in decision-making as well as those factors which call for consideration in the exercising of that autonomy. What needs to be stressed in this regard is that the linchpin of these changes consists in influencing the mind-set, or attitude, of both teacher educators/programme designers and student teachers. In the case of the former, there needs to be recognition of the need to incorporate activities that enable the development of such awareness in their students; while in the case of the latter there needs to be acquired an appreciation of and pragmatic ability to apply what they learn.

Because attitudes and often fairly ingrained ideas about LTE are at stake, it needs to be stressed that any such vision of change and the development of what Kwo refers to as "a new culture of teacher education" (1994, p. 126) is typically going to represent a longer-term agenda; human nature and the traditionally conservative ethos which characterises education virtually guarantee that this will be the case, and any plans for reform would need to be duly sensitive. Even where in principle the need for change is quickly accepted either by the field generally or by particular institutions, it may still take time to implement the ideas involved and exploit them to maximum effect so as to ensure student teachers - and thus the field at large - develop in the desired fashion. As one might expect, any means adopted in order to bring about this end would be subject to those forces governing the spread of innovations in general.

11.2.2 The Fate of Ideas Entering the Public Domain

Another consideration that needs to be taken on board and understood as fully as possible by all parties in the LTE enterprise is the mutability of ideas that make the journey from authorship into the public domain. There is a certain transience to concepts and ideas. They rarely, if ever, remain inert, but instead are prone to influence from the communities into which they are introduced. Here they may be taken up, re-interpreted, developed and broadened through being keyed into other, related lines of enquiry, normally in an effort to create a clarity of vision, and a comprehensiveness and unity of thought in the particular field of endeavour concerned. As a result of such processes, the ideas involved almost inevitably change.

Obviously, whether and to what extent new ideas are seen to relate to other lines of enquiry - and the direction their development consequently takes - depends upon how they are interpreted, which in turn will be largely influenced by the way in which they and the terms used in their exposition are defined at their source - by their "author". These definitions serve three important purposes, each closely linked to the other two:

(i) They make clear intended meaning and so help prevent misunderstanding whilst also clarifying the relevance and potential application of the terms, concepts and ideas concerned.

(ii) They provide a common frame of reference and in doing so minimise any possible ambiguity in the discussion of those concepts and ideas.

(iii) By providing a common frame of reference they help establish and maintain a coherence or unity within the field where the ideas appear. Without such coherence, different ideas become difficult to locate within that field because relating them to the already existing body of knowledge becomes a problematical and arduous undertaking.

Definitions impose order, and part of the confusion surrounding the field of language teaching and stressed continually in previous pages almost certainly has something to do with a failure to 'nail down' the many concepts and terms that pervade it. This was demonstrated in section 2.4 where an inconstancy in the way in which terminology associated with CLT is used by different writers has led to a degree of unclarity that makes it difficult to define and discuss aspects of the approach. In referring to this

phenomenon, Claire Kramsch speaks of a "discourse problem" and provides the example of the term 'communicative competence' which, she notes, was...

> ...originally coined by Hymes (1972) in contradistinction to Chomsky's notion of 'competence', was defined by Gumperz in sociological terms ...[and] redefined in social interactional terms by applied linguist Savignon...Terrell defined 'communicative competence' in individual, albeit interlocutor-directed terms ...[and] with methodologist Omaggio, the term has come to denote an individual's linguistic ability to 'handle everyday social encounters ...with some degree of appropriateness' and to 'hold up [one's] own end of the conversation by making inquiries and offering more elaborate responses' (Omaggio 1986: 16).
>
> (Kramsch 1995, pp. 50-51; parentheses added)

Kramsch concludes that "different political and professional agendas, born from different historical conditions (and, I would add, not always honourable) make communication between researchers and practitioners treacherous" (ibid. p. 51; my parenthetical insert).

Once in the public domain, terms and ideas can undergo change for a variety of reasons, some of which are more sinister than others. Of the more sinister reasons, perhaps the most obvious is the case where a writer knowingly misinterprets and misrepresents an idea either with the intention of being seen to discredit it, or in order that the idea may be more conveniently woven into his own scheme of thought or conceptual agenda, when in its original form it might be irreconcilable with that agenda. The latter of these two situations will presumably arise only in cases where the writer gauges the idea he is intentionally distorting to be respected and thus influential enough to demand that it be taken into account and used to bolster his own cause.

The less sinister reasons for change may be described as such for the reason that they are in a sense accidental, even inevitable in some cases. All ideas, once they enter general circulation and become known, are prone to undergo transformations regardless of the intentions of those who call upon or make reference to them. There are at least three main reasons why this is so. Firstly, and at the simplest level of analysis, there are occasions on which, due either to the reader's lack of insight and/or the originator's lack of written clarity, the term or idea is unintentionally misunderstood and therefore incorrectly applied.

Then there is the case where the original term or idea is correctly understood but subsequently applied inappropriately to a different context. The implications of this can be twofold:

(i) Removing the idea from its original context of application will involve (to a lesser or greater degree) some distortion of that idea as it interacts with its new conceptual environment. Importing the contextual baggage that accompanies and 'supports' the idea in order to counter these effects serves little purpose, for not only will the larger entity be equally prey to distortion, but doing so may also render the original idea impotent, unusable or inappropriate in terms of its role in the new scheme of thought.

(ii) Borrowing and reapplying the original term or idea to an alternative context will almost certainly broaden it, for during the process of relocation it takes on a new shade of meaning or significance reflecting the conceptual characteristics of its new host environment. It becomes perceived of as an inherent part of the larger idea. Its very nature changes as its network of influence grows.

The third and final way terms and ideas change 'unintentionally' has to do with schema theory. Context and the interpretations given to what is perceived by the individual is in large part created by the totality of his ideas and experiences. These form a complex network of inter-relationships the configuration of which is unique for each one of us. As a consequence, there will always be some degree of divergence in the way different individuals interpret like ideas. This non-uniformity may or may not be significant and it will often go unnoticed, but it will always exist.

As terms/ideas change and broaden as a result of these processes, they become vaguer and more diffuse. Defining/describing them becomes problematical and there is a temptation to broaden those ideas still further so as to take into account slight variations of interpretation in the interests of comprehensiveness and maintaining at least an impression of consistency.

If ideas are to maintain as far as possible their true colours and there is to be greater uniformity in the way terms and concepts are utilised, there needs to be an awareness among theorists and practitioners, student teachers and teacher educators, of the dynamics underlying the transformation of ideas. Such awareness is a precondition of the ability to critically appraise and correctly establish the theoretical provenance of

terms and ideas encountered, for in understanding the phenomenon of change, there is acquired a sensitivity to instances of their distortion or manipulation. What amounts, then, to an ability to 'monitor' the treatment of ideas, whilst it cannot prevent some degree of change, can nevertheless play an important role in helping combat accusations of disorientation and incoherence in the field of language teaching.

At the *conceptual level*, then, language teacher education needs to be designed in such as way that it raises student teacher awareness of the dynamics of ideational shifts and changes, thereby providing them with the tools necessary for fathoming the origins and causes of variations and inconsistencies in the interpretation of those ideas. In effect, this endows the student teacher with a greater control over ideas as well as insight into any confusion they may generate.

However, as we have seen with particular reference to Japan, there is another level - the *cultural level* - at which ideas can become distorted, or at least rehabilitated. It is here that ideas get applied within a particular context and in the process undergo a reshaping according to prevailing local conditions. The forces that come into play at this level can be considerable, and if they are not understood and controlled by the practising teacher can result in ineffectual classroom practices which are both out of sync with local customs and unrepresentative of the teaching ideas themselves. It has been argued that in applying these ideas, a willingness and ability to compromise is often called for, and this requires that student teachers be knowledgeable about local conditions, the ideas they wish to apply, and those principles governing their diffusion. Moreover, as far as possible, they need to be practised and systematic in the art of shaping such compromise and ensuring that general ideas get made relevantly particular without them becoming fragmented into random, uninformed activities.

11.2.3 The Paradox of Critical Enquiry

In calling for an attitude of critical enquiry in the language teaching profession, and the promotion of techniques at the level of language teacher education which will help induce such an attitude, any tendency toward idealism needs, perhaps, to be tempered by recognition of what is something of a paradox in the nature of this quest. In attempting to mould teachers who are informed yet critical and autonomous agents, we are, in a

sense, asking for the impossible: In demanding the near absolute objectivity necessary for a fair and comprehensive assessment of ideas, we are simultaneously requiring an affiliation - or at least a closeness of association - with those ideas, something that renders such objectivity unachievable. In other words, put crudely, professionals are being told, "Think carefully about this idea, but do not become too close, or attached, to it". In reality, however, people are not going to think carefully about an idea *unless* they are attached to it in some way, and once this happens they cease to think about it completely objectively. The idea either becomes "too good" or "too bad", both of which situations preclude a balanced assessment. And in cases where there exists indifference toward an idea, it is reasonable to assume that the inclination to subject it to any kind of rigorous critical examination will be minimal - a situation which, as the above chapters have sought to illustrate, leads to disorientation and confusion.

The case where an idea becomes "too good" and thus escapes the process of appraisal that will show it for what it is and provide an indication of its true value to the field, is no better illustrated than by Krashen's *Monitor Model*. While the monitor model has unquestionably served to bring to the fore certain important issues in second language acquisition (the affect, sequential learning etc.), the rapid and wide acclaim it enjoyed during the early '80s belied its weak empirical basis and its divergence from those criteria that define a sound theory. Nevertheless, due no doubt to the very great intuitive appeal of the ideas contained in its 5 hypotheses - many of which, it must be said, may yet prove to be correct - the monitor model took the field by storm, before individuals such as Gregg (1984) and McLaughlin (1987) brought things back down to earth by highlighting its considerable shortcomings. McLaughlin speaks harshly, but honestly, of this phenomenon of individuals within language teaching taking ideas at face value, accepting them as "too good" and recommending them to others - very much to the detriment of the field. Speaking of the Monitor Model, he states:

> Unfortunately, many teachers and administrators accept the theory as the word of God and preach it to the unenlightened. In their enthusiasm for the Gospel according to Krashen, his disciples do a disservice to a field where there are so many unresolved theoretical and practical issues and where so many research questions are unanswered.
>
> (McLaughlin 1987, p. 58)

While the general view of Krashen's model has changed somewhat since these words were written, and his following of zealous "disciples" arguably diminished, the broader point McLaughlin is making remains equally true today as it was in 1987.

11.2.4 Conclusion

By focusing here on the issues of (i) a time scale for the implementation of changes in LTE, (ii) the behaviour of ideas entering the public domain, and (iii) the paradox of critical enquiry, the intention has been to emphasise the fact that the broad change of approach recommended in this study, developed at the level of language teacher education and continually nurtured throughout the English Language Teaching professional's career, is not without its obstacles; and it would be naïve to think otherwise. These obstacles are largely unavoidable for they are often a result of natural tendencies in the way we approach, understand and implement ideas in order to give them relevance and meaning. However, the fact that such forces work against the momentum toward change for the better is not justification for abandoning the quest, but simply for carefully considering it in the light of what is and is not possible, and thus for setting realistic goals in an economical fashion. Indeed, this kind of consideration itself very much encapsulates the philosophy promoted in this thesis: Before prematurely jumping in with suggestions as to what is wrong with the field, and hurriedly implementing ideas thought to offer solutions, it is first necessary to analyse thoroughly the problem and its origins before suggesting a response that has been appraised in terms of its relationship to and ability to address that problem, as well as the most effective way to bring about its implementation.

11.3 Directions for Future Research

As a result of the discussion, argument and recommendations that have been presented in these 11 chapters, a number of potentially fertile areas for investigation suggest themselves.

With regard to communicative language teaching in particular, the focus of this study was confined to looking at how the analysis and rehabilitation of the approach offered might affect its suitability for

application in a *particular context*, Japan. However, a further and potentially interesting line of enquiry would consist of an investigation into *teaching materials* which claim to be adopting a communicative approach. That is, do the kinds of problems and confusions characterizing CLT and identified in Chapters 2-5 transfer to communicative textbooks, or are they, for example, somehow filtered out or glossed over by writers and publishers superficially adopting broad facets of the approach as a token gesture calculated to provide materials with commercial appeal? If textbooks do appear to inherit or manifest the conceptual flaws unearthed here, can their resolution as described in Chapters 5 and 6 serve as the basis for an improvement of such texts, and if so how?

The area of language teacher education, the broader issue underlying this study, likewise generates a number of potentially fruitful lines of enquiry which would benefit from further research. Among these are the following:

Although by no means offered as an all-encompassing account of activities which can help promote reflective autonomy in language teachers, those recommendations for LTE suggested in Chapter 9 beg an important question: It is common knowledge (backed up by research - e.g. Long and Sato, ibid.) that regardless of what they may learn in teacher preparation programmes - what we might term their *intellectual knowledge* - teachers in the classroom tend very often to revert to those methods by which they themselves were taught, although they may be unaware that they are doing so. That is, they defer to a kind of 'default methodology'. On this basis, one is left wondering whether and to what extent the proposed benefits of activities designed to create reflective autonomy would actually be/are realised in service. Are the skills such activities seek to instil actually applied in the teacher's decision-making once he has completed his training and is out in the real world, in real classrooms where he may well be at liberty to teach precisely as he chooses? Research could shed light on this question through longitudinal studies designed to compare the in-service payoff provided by language teacher preparation programmes set up so as to emphasise and develop reflective autonomy in student teachers, with those where no such emphasis is intentionally built into programme design.

Other studies might look at the relative efficacy - in terms of the amount of language learning that takes place - of teaching practices based on principles of reflective autonomy as opposed to more pragmatic,

spontaneous and textbook driven pedagogies. Assuming there is a difference and that the kinds of activities that promote those principles at the level of LTE are widely adopted as a result, it would make an interesting, if long term project, to attempt to assess any effects of such a shift on perceptions and thus the reputation of the field of language teaching both from without and within.

This research has sought to provide a rationale for a change in the content of language teacher preparation programmes in accordance with a series of proposed principles and techniques. It would be enlightening if research were to be forthcoming which investigated the extent to which language teacher preparation programmes presently reflect the spirit of this study and incorporate similar principles and techniques specifically with the intention of empowering teachers-to-be in the fashion that has been suggested. If such investigations were to show that these principles and practices have indeed been adopted in certain cases, the question would then need to be asked as to the motivation for their adoption and whether they feature as the result of the kind of rationale presented here or simply because the notion of the "reflective practitioner' has itself become somewhat of a buzzword in recent years and thus lends programmes a superficial ring of credibility.

Other fertile research territory concerns the issue of the application of ideas to particular socio-cultural contexts. There might well be value in studies which seek to identify a set of strategies for analysing and adjusting ideas so as to make them more compatible with the immediate context of their application. In other words, there is a need to articulate the nature of the relationship between ideas and context in more specific and elegant terms than, for example, Henrichsen's framework provides (re. 9.3.3). Teachers need a more user-friendly, procedural description of how the two can be made to relate to each other in the process of moulding a pedagogically effective compromise, rather than - or in addition to - the kind of declarative presentation Henrichsen provides. Research seeking to provide this would no doubt be welcomed.

A related area of enquiry would be cross-cultural attitudes to the phenomenon of diffusion, and the undertaking of ethnographic surveys into the most effective ways of opening up communities in general to alternative views on language teaching/language teacher education practices. Such surveys would aim not so much at a theoretical identification of the different variables governing diffusion, but at

establishing common views as to how best to ensure that new ideas will get adopted most swiftly.

Perhaps most important, though, is the need to further highlight the existence of a problem in the uncritical approach so often taken to the array of new ideas that continually appear in language teaching, and which make it the vibrant enterprise it was described as in the opening pages of this study. Until adequate recognition of that problem and its implications is secured, it will prove difficult to convince the profession at large - and particularly designers of language teacher preparation programmes - of the need to carefully consider the potential benefits promised by suggestions of the kind proposed here, and therefore commit themselves wholeheartedly to their implementation. In other words, there is a call for additional studies, similar to that undertaken in the foregoing pages, which further illustrate the kind of incoherence, confusions, inconsistencies and contradictions which are at present all too characteristic of our field. If such studies are forthcoming, they ought to bring with them the enlightenment, motivation and momentum necessary to ensuring that change for the better ensues.

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